

The Perceptions of Teacher Leadership in Elementary Schools According to Female Elementary  
School Principals

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to determine how female elementary school principals' perceptions of teacher leadership, namely how it is defined, facilitated, and sustained in their schools, were related to their own views on leadership and approaches to leadership theory. Understanding the perspectives of principals with respect to teacher leadership and the opportunities for the development of teacher leadership could help to start the dialogue between principals and teachers toward improved opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles. Data were gathered from a school district located in the Midwestern region of the United States. Four female elementary principals from the same school district were interviewed two separate times. In addition to the interviews, a demographic questionnaire from each participant was also obtained. Each piece of information provided a deeper look into the experience of the participants in terms of their leadership style and how they facilitate teacher leadership opportunities in their schools. The questionnaire was uploaded and administered as a web based questionnaire, with respondents contacted through email. The qualitative findings of this case study indicated: (a) principals in this study perceive there to be various and numerous roles in which teacher leaders can be involved both formally and informally; (b) principals in this study engage in various methods to facilitate teacher leadership but the most productive method is to identify and then capitalize on individual strengths of teachers; and (c) principals' leadership styles in this study are not an isolated leadership style or theory; rather they are a combination of various well-known leadership styles and theories. Based on the results from the research, principals should better define the role of teacher leadership and they should refer to their teachers as teacher leaders regularly so that teacher leaders and others view themselves in leadership roles.

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## **Table of Contents**

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
List of Figures and Tables .....	ix

### **CHAPTER 1: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	6
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions .....	8
Definitions of Terms .....	9
Assumptions and Limitations .....	10
Organization of the Dissertation.....	12

### **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Review and Analysis of Leadership Styles .....	14
Transformational Leadership Style .....	14
Servant Leadership Style .....	20
Distributed Leadership Style .....	23
Need for Teacher Leadership .....	28
Teacher Leadership Definitions .....	32
Teacher Leadership Standards .....	40
Current Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher Leaders .....	42

The Emerging Trend of Females in Leadership Roles in Education .....	46
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### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

Introduction .....	49
Purpose of the Study .....	49
Research Design .....	50
Research Questions .....	54
Setting/Context .....	55
Participants .....	56
Instruments .....	57
Data Collection .....	58
Data Analysis .....	58
Credibility and Trustworthiness .....	60

### **CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Introduction .....	64
Research Questions .....	64
Interview Results.....	64
Participants	
Principal Angie .....	65
Principal Betty .....	76
Principal Cathy .....	86
Principal Debby.....	98

Organization of Data Analysis .....	107
Summary .....	108

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Summary of Study .....	109
Findings.....	109
Conclusions .....	112
Implications for Teacher Education .....	114
Future Research .....	115

<b><u>REFERENCES</u></b> .....	118
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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter .....	130
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form .....	132
Appendix C: Request for Approval from School Districts.....	136
Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire .....	139
Appendix E: Interview Protocols .....	141



## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure	Page
1. Transformation within an organization .....	16
2. Teacher leadership activities .....	45

Table	Page
1. Components and practices of transformational leadership .....	17
2. Transformational leadership attributes .....	18
3. Dimensions of servant leadership .....,.....	21
4. Servant leadership attributes .....	23
5. Responsibilities of principals .....	29
6. Rubric of emerging teacher leadership .....	35
7. Domains, actions, expectations of teacher leadership .....	41
8. Examples of teacher leadership .....	42
9. Formal and informal teacher leadership .....	44
10. School district racial demographics .....	55
11. School demographics .....	65

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Leadership is of vital importance in educational organizations at all levels – classroom, building, district office, and state departments of education. Regardless of whether that organization is a school, a school district, or a state department of education, leadership is required in order to develop a vision, create a mission and work to establish goals for that organization. “The leader creates a school climate in which everybody learns, learning is shared, and critique isn’t just tolerated, but welcomed... There’s mutual agreement that any interventions that don’t achieve the intended impact will be changed or dropped” (Hattie, 2015, p. 38).

Educational leaders strive toward the ultimate mission of providing every learner with a quality education that will prepare them for college, a career, and living lives as productive citizens of a global society. Effective leadership, though, does not reside in one person at the head of any of these organizations, but pervades the entire organization, instilling a sense of purpose and direction (Spillane, 2005; DuBrin 2007). Lambert (1998) describes the importance of thinking of leadership as more than what the principal can do in a school. Lambert explains:

When we equate the powerful concept of leadership with the behaviors of one person, we are limiting the achievement of broad-based participation by a community or society.

School leadership needs to be a broad concept that is separated from person, role, and a discrete set of individual behaviors. It needs to be embedded in the school community as a whole. Such a broadening of the concept of leadership suggests shared responsibility for a shared purpose of community (p.5).

Kan, Kim, and Maubourgne define leadership as “the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organizational goals” (as cited by DuBrin, 2007, p.2). Leadership can also be seen as a partnership between leaders and group members. The more various members of educational organizations are involved in leading, either in formal or informal leadership positions, the greater likelihood authentic leadership will be demonstrated (DuBrin, 2007).

Leadership is increasingly effective when organizations move away from a hierarchical, top-down approach and embrace a broader structure that operates on many levels (DuBrin, 2007). In order for a partnership to exist, four criteria must be present. These four criteria include an, “exchange of purpose, the right to say no, joint accountability, and absolute honesty” (DuBrin, 2007, pp. 3-4). Additionally, leadership is effective when it can be practiced by individuals not assigned to a formal leadership position (DuBrin, 2007). This sense of shared, distributed leadership is capable of being employed at all levels of educational organizations. However, traditional views tend to impede the application of shared leadership in practice at the setting that needs it the most - the schools (Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Seashore Louis, 2009). As a result, there exists a need for re-conceptualizing leadership practices in schools (Bedell & Burrello, 2006; Berry, Byrd, & Wieder, 2013). Educational leadership must continue to seek new models to sustain leadership and accelerate increased academic growth to meet the needs of all children (Donaldson, 2006).

Based upon their own experiences as teacher leaders, job-specific experience (as opposed to general teaching experience) has a positive and significant impact on teachers who become a principal (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012). These experiences influenced their development and

approach as leaders, and as a result, elementary school principals tend to define teacher leadership through practical experiences found in a school setting such as assisting with school-wide tasks, responsibilities and additional leadership roles (Berry et al., 2013). Secondly, elementary school principals also facilitate teacher leadership by developing and promoting a culture which fosters collaboration and collegiality in schools by both modeling leadership and providing opportunities for teacher leadership such as “resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum experts, classroom supporters, and school leaders” (Berry et al., 2013, p.5). Finally, elementary school principals sustain teacher leadership through building teacher leadership capacity, cultivating a sense of trust and autonomy through a shared vision, mission and set of values amongst adult learners, and facilitating organizational structures where leadership opportunities exist (Berry et al., 2013).

In addition to defining what teacher leadership is at the school level, principals have the daunting task of developing these teacher leaders regardless of the natural qualities or traits the teachers possess. Developing teacher leaders often requires teachers to openly discuss their practice and work together to solve instructional problems. As Berry, Johnson, and Montgomery (2005) describe, teacher leaders form “organized professional learning teams to research solutions to problems uncovered by a careful analysis of school data” (p.58). The high level of trust and the ability to have candid conversations about instructional practices and data analysis allows for teacher leadership to develop within schools. In data-informed schools, teacher leaders are provided the data and allotted time to have meaningful, purposeful conversations about instructional applications and implications to improve learning (Berry et al., 2005).

Principals can develop teacher leadership within a school by modeling and facilitating collaborative efforts. As Nazareno (2015) demonstrates, “most professionals don’t operate in

silos like what we see in traditional models of schooling” (p.30). As a result, principals must help teachers understand the importance of collaboration and provide concrete learning experiences where teachers can develop the skills to collaboratively work together on common goals. Collaboration cannot be assumed as a skill among all teachers. As a result, principals should evaluate the needs of their teachers, similar to how teachers evaluate the needs of their students, in an effort to identify how to develop the collaborative skills of their teachers.

Once elementary school principals have defined and facilitated teacher leadership in schools, elementary principals can sustain teacher leadership structures and address school-wide goals by creating a school-based teacher, professional learning community. Principals are in the position to identify, choose or even recruit teacher leaders which can form a professional learning community. Having a professional learning community with active participation and involvement allows teachers to work together to focus on instructional practices, new ideas, and their implications on student learning (DuFour, 2004). DuFour (2004) describes three main functions of professional learning communities which enhance the goals of the school: ensure all students learn, collaborate on school improvement efforts, and focus on results. All of these functions, when supported by principals and driven and developed by teachers, can sustain teacher leadership in schools.

Principals can also build high levels of trust and autonomy with teacher leaders. As Nazareno (2015) describes, schools develop a high level of teacher leadership when “teachers have the collective autonomy to make decisions that impact whole-school success” (p.29). When teachers have the trust of one another and the autonomy to make impactful decisions, the desire to continue to lead will be sustained over time.

Gender is a significant variable in the study of educational leadership (Coleman, Haiyan, & Yanping, 1998; Gaziel, 1995) because attitudes regarding women in leadership are influenced by an underlying patriarchy. Difficulties experienced by women in school leadership positions are not only attitudinal, but also, even though women have made great strides in gaining positions formerly held by men, many women struggle with balancing demanding leadership roles with domestic and child-rearing responsibilities at home (Coleman et al., 1998).

Historically, there have been a disproportionate number of male administrators versus female, despite the predominance of female teachers. In 1971, women represented 67.2% of the total teaching force, but they were less than 16% of assistant principals, principals, and administrative assistants to the superintendent nationally (National Education Association, 1972). By the 1980s, “the percentage of women in school administration was less than the percentage of women in 1905” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 51) despite the dawn of affirmative action policies. Women were seen as better suited for the classroom than administration. Women would teach; men would lead.

As school systems pursue leaders to initiate reform, women are currently seen as desirable to lead change efforts. Brunner and Grogan (2007) found that women bring a wealth of experience, having spent more years as classroom teachers when compared with men. Women’s tenure in the classroom translates into expertise in learning and curriculum (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Women also possess strong interpersonal skills which are essential to effective leadership including their emphasis on collaboration, communication, and integration (Funk, 2004; Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Women offer not only sound competence in pedagogy and instructional practices, but also positive human relations or “people skills” which make them effective change agents.

## **Statement of the Problem**

As the leaders of schools, principals are uniquely situated to identify, develop and even recruit teacher leaders in an effort to develop a leadership culture within the school community. With the recent accountability measures schools face, school leaders need to be able to effectively develop leaders within their schools to help schools effectively meet the needs of all stakeholders – students, staff, families and the community. By developing teacher leaders, principals are not only developing future leaders but are also creating multiple avenues to help the school run effectively, efficiently, and successfully.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore female elementary principals' perceptions of teacher leadership. As Wright (2008) stated in her study, principals are rarely asked about their perceptions of teacher leadership. In the study itself, Wright (2008) stated that principals often responded in generalities relating to benefits for students when asked to comment on what impact distributed leadership had on student achievement. Furthermore, she recommends that "principals need to deconstruct conscious and unconscious beliefs about leadership by reflecting on leadership practice through an investigation of lived routines and formally-designed structures" (pp. 26-27). This study examined female principals' perceptions and beliefs about teacher leadership. Hence, the purpose of this qualitative interview study is to investigate female elementary school principals' perceptions of teacher leadership, namely how principals define teacher leadership, how principals facilitate teacher leadership, and how principals sustain existing teacher leadership structures to meet

school goals. Additionally, the study invited more critical reflection by principals as they discuss and examine their own perceptions.

Transformational leadership, servant leadership, and distributed leadership were selected as leadership styles to explore for this study because all three styles have characteristics which promote the development of the group members, teacher leaders for this study. As this study attempts to better understand female elementary principals' perceptions on teacher leadership, these styles of leadership were explored to better understand the relationship between principals' leadership styles and their working definitions of teacher leadership, how teacher leaders are utilized in schools, and how teacher leadership is sustained over time. Instructional leadership was a leadership style that was considered for this study. This study was designed to see if there were particular characteristics of leadership theory that would be demonstrated by the participants. Instructional leadership incorporates characteristics of the three leadership styles selected and therefore was determined that it would not be considered for this study.

This study examined the female elementary principals' perception of teacher leadership. In an effort to discover additional literature to better understand the current underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in education, it became evident that there is limited up-to-date research regarding the continued disparity. Most of the research in the United States that specifically focuses on the disproportionate ratio of males and females in education occurred in the 1970s and 1980s when the women's movement was a spirited and active force. What was of interest while reviewing earlier and present research is that many of the causalities, conclusions and recommendations were similar in spite of the 30-year span.

According to Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) there are three main gender imbalances within the teaching workforce: (a) gender imbalance across educational phases – women are



concentrated in the primary sectors, (b) across subjects taught – there is a lower proportion of women in math and sciences when compared to other subjects, and (c) across positions – women are underrepresented in advanced positions – across all educational phases.

Female elementary principals were selected as the subjects of this study as little research has been conducted specifically on female elementary principals' perceptions on teacher leadership. In addition, females have increasingly assumed more principal roles at the elementary school level at 64% of all elementary principal positions (Bitterman, Goldring, & Gray, 2013).

This study provided valuable insight, currently absent from scholarly literature, into principals' views of teacher leadership. This study could potentially benefit principals, the findings as a result of the interview, and observations may suggest crucial ideas for principals and school districts understanding and ability to support in ways to define, facilitate the development of teacher leadership, and the sustainability of teacher leadership in schools. In addition, this study could benefit teachers as well, as what principals identify as qualities of teacher leadership could be used as a guide for teacher education programs and professional development both at a school and district-wide level.

### **Research Questions**

In order to explore principals' perceptions of teacher leadership, it is important to ask elementary principals to define teacher leadership, explain how leadership is fostered in their schools, and explain how leadership can be sustained and continued over time. The following research questions served this study:

- 1) How do female elementary school principals define teacher leadership?

2) How do female elementary school principals facilitate the development of teacher leadership in schools?

3) How do female elementary school principals encourage teacher leadership and sustain existing teacher leadership structures to address school-wide goals?

### **Definitions of Terms**

For this study, "teacher leadership" is defined as both formal and informal opportunities that teachers have in improving classroom instruction, professional development, and addressing school-wide goals. Although there are other situations in which a teacher can become a leader, and formal roles which utilize teachers outside of the classroom (Reeves, 2008), the focus of this study was to demonstrate how female elementary principals perceive teacher leadership in an instructional and professional context.

"Leadership capacity" is another term that it is necessary to define for this study. Lambert (2005) explains that "leadership capacity" is defined as "broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership that leads to lasting school improvement" (p. 38). "Broad-based participation" means that there are inclusive structures that allow different groups to participate and be heard (Lambert, 2005). "Skillful" refers to valuing the background knowledge and experience of those who participate (Lambert, 2005). As Barth writes, "building capacity involves tapping into the reservoir of 'underutilized talent with an organization'" (2003, p.62).

"Axial coding" is the process in which researchers "group initial codes along conceptual categories that reflect commonalities among codes. The codes are clustered around points of intersection, or axes" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p.223). During the

axial coding process, the researcher looks for “any and all kinds of relations... and fit things into a basic frame of general relationships, axial coding” (Borgatti, 2014, NP).

“Audit trail” refers to the transparent way the data was collected, managed and reported. The purpose of an audit trail is to “account for all the data and for all the design decisions made in the field so that anyone can see data as evidence and trace the logic leading to the representation and interpretation of findings” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p.230). An additional purpose of the audit trail is to allow researchers to present their methods in such detail that “other researchers can use their original report as an operating manual by which to replicate the study” (Merriam, 1988, p.173).

“Analytic memos” refer to the writings of the researcher as he or she documents thoughts about how the data are “coming together in clusters, patterns or themes as the data accumulate... writing prompts the analyst to identify categories that subsume a number of initial codes. It helps identify linkages among coded data” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p.221).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

Assumptions are expectations that the researcher assumed to be true about the participants and the data collected from the participants. The following assumptions were made in this study. The first assumption made about the principals in the study is that the principals who are willing to participate and be interviewed would provide honest and truthful responses that reflect their true beliefs to the best of their abilities. A second assumption made about the principals in the study is that they are in favor of modes of distributed leadership such as

teacher leadership. Because this is a study of perceptions intended to invite principals to the dialogue about teacher leadership, positive perceptions are likely to be reported. The possibility of negative perceptions does exist, but this study assumes positive perceptions in general.

This study considered several factors that might influence the female principals' perceptions on teacher leadership. These factors that might influence the female elementary school principal's perceptions are several limitations of the study. Limitations allow the reader to understand "what the study is and is not – its boundaries – and how its results can and cannot contribute to understanding" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 85). First, the context of who the principal studied and formed their own leadership styles from may influence their beliefs on how they define and facilitate teacher leadership in their schools. Second, with principals being held ultimately responsible for the overall success and failure of the school, this notion of accountability may influence the female principals' perceptions on teacher leadership. Third, data sources for this study include interviews and review of demographic questionnaires. Possible limitations of these data sources include researcher bias and unequal perception of information from multiple participants. Fourth, the fact that many, if not all, principals began their careers as a teacher and moved up to the role of a principal, the experiences one has in schools can be repeated due to the similar setting and context with a K-12 school environment.

Another limitation to this study is the sample from which the participants were drawn from only represent one school district. The sample of this study was drawn from one school district in the Midwest region of the United States. The possibility exists that different regions of the country have different leadership concerns given their unique circumstances and the perspectives from these elementary school principals may not represent

other elementary school principals. In addition, this sample may not apply to rural and urban schools, as the sample was drawn from suburban schools.

Delimitations are situations or circumstances that the researcher could control. The following were delimitations of this study. First, the time available for data collection was limited due to the timeline created by the researcher and approved by the school district located in the Midwest region of the United States. The scope of the study was limited to the transcribed and interpreted data collected from interviews and document review provided by a small sample of participants identified through purposeful sampling.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Following this introduction, chapter two provides a review of literature which situates my study within the following topics of scholarship: 1) research on three leadership styles which promote teacher leadership opportunities (transformational, servant, and distributed), 2) definitions, the need for, and roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders, and 3) scholarship on the emerging role of female leadership in elementary schools. Chapter two concludes with a discussion of the connection among these topics.

Chapter three provides an overview of methodology including a discussion of the research paradigm that guided my inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and the in-depth, semi-structured interview methodology that structured it (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Roulston, 2010; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data collection (Hycner, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and analysis techniques, both inductive (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013; Hycner, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Thomas, 2006) and deductive (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Gale et al., 2013; Hycner, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016),

were also discussed. Additionally, I provided an introduction to my 4 participants and a description of the research context—female principals in the Midwest region of the United States. Lastly, I detailed the ways in which I met the trustworthiness criteria of credibility and dependability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to ensure that my qualitative research was rigorous and ethical.

Chapter four moves from methodology to the first section of my findings, an analysis of female elementary principals' perceptions of teacher leadership.

Chapter five focuses on participants' perceptions of teacher leadership. Potential themes from the interview responses are discussed in detail in this chapter and could be tied back to the research on leadership styles presented in chapter two.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

### **A Review and Analysis of Leadership Styles**

Educational leadership is in the forefront of major reform for schools. In order to gain insight into the complexity of today's school, it is essential that research is conducted at the school level due to the differences each school and staff encompasses. This review on educational leadership grounds the need for this study. The literature review provides an overview of the important topics surrounding leadership styles and teacher leadership in schools. It begins with a descriptive analysis of various structures of leadership, namely transformational, servant, and distributed leadership. Included in the research review are leadership styles, the need for teacher leadership, how teacher leadership might be defined and facilitated in elementary schools, and the emerging trend of elementary female principals.

### **Transformational Leadership Style**

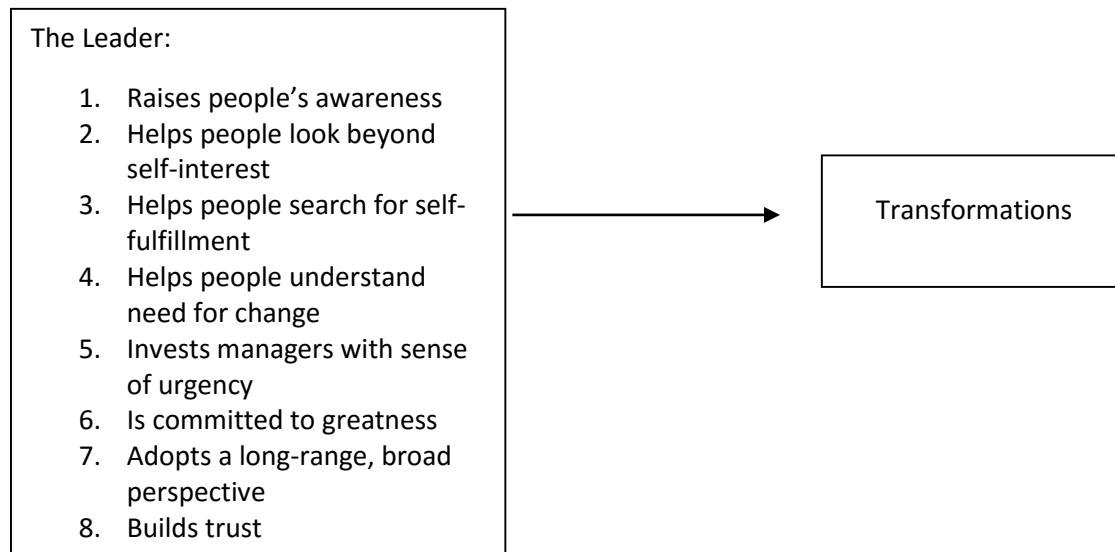
Transformational leadership has the “fundamental aim of fostering capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 204). Leithwood and Sun (2012) further define this style of leadership as when given adequate support, organizational members become highly engaged and motivated by goals that are “inspirational because those goals are associated with values in which they strongly believe—or are persuaded to strongly believe” (p.388). In addition, transformational leadership identifies “which internal states of organizational members are critical to their performance and specifies a set of leaders’ practices most likely to have a positive influence on those internal states” (p.389).

Although studied primarily in business settings, transformational leadership can encompass additional types of organizations, such as schools, and often involves several leadership practices and behaviors that facilitate organizational change (DuBrin, 2007). DuBrin (2007) defines a transformational leader as “one who brings about positive, major changes in an organization” (p.72). Over the past decades, accumulating evidence suggests that transformational leadership is significantly associated with follower attitudes and performance (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Principals who are transformational leaders are able to identify and articulate a school mission and vision, support a culture of intellectual growth and engagement, motivate others by setting examples, and provide support and development to individual staff members (Leithwood, 1994; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Within transformational leadership theory, four different practices are addressed: (1) inspirational motivation, (2) individualized consideration, (3) idealized influence (charisma), and (4) intellectual stimulation (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The essence of transformational leadership ... is developing and transforming people” (DuBrin, 2007, p.86).

In an effort to bring about organizational change, the leader can take several steps to bring about transformational change. Figure 1 demonstrates how transformation takes place within an organization.



Figure 1  
Transformation leadership within organizations



(DuBrin, 2007, p.84)

Included in the transformational leadership theory are two additional leadership elements: transactional leadership and non-leadership. Transactional leadership is based on a simple exchange relationship with followers, including the practices of contingent reward and management by exception-active. Non-Leadership is the absence of leadership, which includes management by exception-passive and laissez-faire leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Strong transformational leaders tend to also demonstrate strong transactional leadership practices, but conversely would not demonstrate management by exception-passive or laissez-faire leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

The following components and practices are compared and differentiated in Table 1 (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Gregory Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004):

Table 1  
Components and practices of transformational leadership.

Components and practices of transformational leadership	Definition
Inspirational motivation	The degree to which leaders inspire followers with a strong vision of the future
Individualized consideration	The degree to which leaders understand the individual needs of their followers and develop individuals through coaching
Idealized influence (charisma)	The degree to which leaders influence others by example, requiring trust, admiration and respect
Intellectual stimulation	The degree to which leaders encourage innovation and divergent thinking, creating a climate of creativity by challenging norms and taking calculated risks
Contingent reward	The degree to which leaders establish productive transactions with followers
Management by exception-active:	A process that involves anticipating problems and monitoring follower behavior to take corrective action before problems become serious
Management by exception-passive	The practice of waiting until problems are serious before taking action
Laissez-faire leadership	The absence or avoidance of leadership, characterized by avoidance of responsibility, disorganization, and little direction or support

The transformational leader articulates the vision in a clear and appealing manner, explains how to attain the vision, acts confidently and optimistically, expresses confidence in the followers, emphasizes values with symbolic actions, leads by example, and empowers followers to achieve the vision (DuBrin, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Table 2 summarizes the four primary or functional areas of transformational leadership and identifies the attributes that, according to the literature, accompany these primary characteristics (Gregory Stone, et al. 2004).

Table 2  
Transformational Leadership Attributes

Functional attributes	Accompanying attributes
(1) Idealized influence/charisma	Vision Trust Respect Risk-sharing Integrity Modeling
(2) Inspirational motivation	Commitment to goals Communication Enthusiasm
(3) Intellectual Stimulation	Rationality Problem Solving
(4) Individualized consideration	Personal attention Mentoring Listening Empowerment

Transformational leadership by school principals has been associated with positive outcomes such as improvements in the school environment and in teacher and staff relations (Bogler, 2005; Griffith, 2004). As a result, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) suggest transformational leadership is an ideal leadership style for principals of schools considering

substantial reform due to the fact that change management is a strength of transformational leaders.

In addition to research that demonstrates positive outcomes in school environment and teacher and staff relations, transformational leadership also has found a strong positive effect on followers' organizational commitment (Bhal & Ansari, 2007; Liao & Chuang, 2007). For example, Lo, Ramayah, Min, and Songan (2010) examined the effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment in Malaysia. A shared goal commitment emerges among followers when a transformational leader encourages the beliefs and importance of the goal accomplishment, which in turn enhances followers' organizational commitment, in this case, the commitment to the school vision, mission and values. Transformational leadership encourages the building of commitment to the organizational objectives. The primary focus is on the organization, with follower development and empowerment secondary to accomplishing the organizational objectives (Yukl, 2002).

In a review of eighty-seven studies to examine the impact of transformational leadership on various measures of performance compared to transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles, Judge and Piccolo (2004) concluded that the transformational leadership showed the highest overall relationships on the following six criteria, (a) follower job satisfaction, (b) follower leader satisfaction, (c) follower motivation, (d) leader job performance, (e) group or organization performance, and (f) rated leader effectiveness.

However, there is a weaker relationship between students' academic achievement and transformational leadership (Leithwood et al., 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). In a study of 665 primary schools in England, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found that transformational

leadership had strong direct effects on teachers' motivation and the school cultural environment, but failed to explain the variance in students' achievement gains on national literacy exams. Similarly, Ross and Gray (2006) collected data from elementary schools in Canada and found that transformational leadership had strong direct effects on teacher self-efficacy and teacher commitment, but weaker indirect effects on student achievement.

### **Servant Leadership Style**

Robert Greenleaf is often credited with developing the concept of servant leadership within the constructs of leadership development (Spears, 1996). Greenleaf (1977) referred to the lack of leadership preparation by colleges and universities for students as “the leadership crisis” (p.77). This “leadership crisis” led Greenleaf to develop the concept of servant leadership with distinguishing characteristics from other leadership styles. The servant leader's primary objective is to serve and meet the needs of others, rather than upon self, which optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership (Russell & Gregory Stone, 2002). Self-interest should not motivate servant leadership; rather, it should ascend to a higher level of motivation that focuses on the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1977).

Servant leadership is rooted in the principles, values and beliefs of the leader (Greenleaf, 1977). Within the servant leadership model, the goals of the organization can best be accomplished by serving others. One aspect of leadership is the influence leaders have with those within the organization. According to Greenleaf (1977), in the servant leadership style, the leader is seen as credible and influential when the servant behavior and the words of the leader support one another.

The leader's ability, benevolence, and integrity are specific antecedents of trust in leaders. These three dimensions are part of servant leadership behaviors (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) differentiate the premise of servant leadership when they conclude, "Servant leadership is not a particular supervisory style one chooses to use when it is convenient or personally advantageous. Rather it is a conviction of the heart that constantly manifests whenever there is a legitimate need to serve in the absence of extenuating personal benefits" (p. 645).

Unlike transformational leadership where the primary focus is on the organization and the organizational goals, servant leadership's primary focus is on the followers, not the organizations. Rather than being preoccupied with mobilizing followers to achieve the organization's commitment and goals, servant leaders emphasize followers' needs, development, and autonomy (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Through the commitment to the followers' needs, development and autonomy, followers in servant leadership relationships to "grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants" (Greenleaf, 1977, pp. 13-14).

In an effort to define and validate the dimensions that constitute servant leadership as a construct, Liden, Wayne, Zhao and Henderson (2008, p.162) describe the nine dimensions of servant leadership.

Table 3  
Dimensions of Servant Leadership

Dimensions	Meaning
Behaving Ethically	Interacting openly, fairly, and honestly with others

Conceptual skills	Possessing the knowledge of the organization and tasks at hand so as to be in a position to effectively support and assist others, especially immediate followers
Creating value for the community	A conscious, genuine concern for helping the community
Empowerment	Encouraging and facilitating others, especially immediate followers, in identifying and solving problems, as well as determining when and how to complete work tasks
Emotional Healing	The act of showing sensitivity to others' personal concerns
Helping subordinates grow and succeed	Demonstrating genuine concern for others' career growth and development by providing support and mentoring
Putting subordinates first	Using actions and words to make it clear to others that satisfying their work needs is a priority
Relationships	The act of making a genuine effort to know, understand, and support others in the organization, with an emphasis on building long-term relationships with immediate followers
Servanthood	A way of being marked by one's self-categorization and desire to be characterized by others as someone who serves others first, even when self-sacrifice is required

The servant leader does not serve with a primary focus on results; rather the servant leader focuses on service itself. Consequently, the servant leader's first responsibilities are relationships and people, and those relationships take precedence over the task and product. (Gregory Stone, et al., 2004). Servant leaders trust their followers to undertake actions that are in the best interest of the organization, even though the leaders do not primarily focus on organizational objectives. In a school setting where accountability measures (test scores and fiscal responsibility among others) are prevalent, servant leadership requires a great deal of trust between the followers and the servant leaders (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010).

Russell and Gregory Stone (2002), identify nine key attributes to which they categorize the attributes as functional. Their classification as functional attributes derive from their repetition in the literature. In addition to the nine key functional attributes, Russell and Gregory Stone (2002) also identified eleven other accompanying characteristics of servant leadership. These twenty characteristics of servant leadership are displayed in Table 4

Table 4  
Servant leadership attributes (Gregory Stone et al., 2004)

Functional Attributes	Contributing attributes
Vision	Communication
Honesty, integrity	Credibility
Trust	Competence
Service	Stewardship
Modeling	Visibility
Pioneering	Influence
	Persuasion
Appreciation of others	Listening
	Encouragement
Empowerment	Teaching
	Delegation

### **Distributed Leadership Style**

Teacher leadership can often be a vague term involving a variety of responsibilities, tasks and roles. York-Barr and Duke (2004) compiled a comprehensive review of teacher leadership. In their comprehensive review of teacher leadership, York-Barr and Duke describe 3 waves of teacher leadership. In wave 1, teachers served in formal roles such as grade-level chairs or department heads and took on managerial roles which were designed to further the efficiency of school operations. These roles often involved doing the work that administrators did not want to perform.



In wave 2, teachers took on more instructional roles assisting with curriculum implementation, facilitating staff professional development and mentoring new teachers as part of an induction process and mentoring program. In wave 3, teachers began to have leadership roles within Professional Leadership Communities (PLCs) in an effort to support collaboration and continuous improvement and learning among themselves.

Within these three waves of leadership roles in schools, there emerge two larger models of teacher leadership that can occur in schools which fall within the distributed leadership conceptual framework, such as Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark, and Mumford (2009) collective leadership model and Smylie's (2007) framework of distributed leadership.

Friedrich et al. (2009) developed a graphic framework for collective leadership. Friedrich et al., provides a definition of collective leadership that is "a dynamic leadership process in which a defined leader, or set of leaders, selectively utilize skills and expertise within a network, effectively distributing elements of the leadership role as the situation or problem at hand requires" (p. 933). Friedrich et al. make the distinction between distributed leadership and collective leadership by describing collective leadership as a version of "whack-a-mole" leadership because collective leadership relies on the person with the right skills and expertise to "pop up" as the situation requires (p. 934). In contrast, Friedrich et al. (2009) point out that distributed leadership seems to assume who "distributes" the leadership, how the leadership is distributed, and how all the people in an organization respond to that set of circumstances. The main idea of collective leadership is to remember that everyone has different capabilities, but can work together toward a common goal and purpose by cultivating a shared mission, vision, and set of values.

An example of distributed leadership is shared in Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Seashore Louis' (2007) study of the development of distributed leadership. In Smylie et al.'s, study, the principal of the school adopted a three-step plan to introduce distributed leadership to the school. This three-step plan was created as a way to develop a leadership culture within the school. The principal used this method as a concrete way to facilitate teacher leadership within the existing framework of the school structure.

The first step in the strategic plan was to engage a small group in leadership roles. This initial group was appointed by the principal (Smylie et al., 2007) and worked to address goals of the school. The second step of the plan was to engage another small group the following year. Unlike the previous year where the group was appointed by the principal, this time the group was composed of volunteers. The third step of the plan was intended to engage a third group of leaders; however, this step never came to fruition because, as a result of the first two steps, more staff had assumed leadership roles within the school and a leadership culture was already developing. This three-step plan is one way to define teacher leaders in schools in a distributed model as the principal distributed the roles throughout the staff by first selecting leaders and then expanding the scope of the leadership roles within the school.

According to Spillane, Camburn, and Stitzel Pareja (2007) and Harris (2008), three main reasons exemplify the popularity of distributed leadership. First, it has a normative power that reflects what is occurring in schools. Expansion of the leadership tasks of the school leader has led to the possibility of distributing leadership tasks within the school. It is a leadership view that emphasizes collaboration and teamwork rather than the work of individual teachers. Second, distributed leadership has representational power that shows a different approach to leadership due to the expanding demands on schools. Distributed leadership demonstrates that

an educational organization has realized that the traditional organizational design of the school does not always capitalize on the expertise already present within the school to meet new challenges. Finally, distributed leadership has empirical power because it has the potential to make a difference in student achievement and organizational outcomes.

Those leaders who believe in and utilize a distributed leadership style understand the importance that leadership is not one person working alone and that change occurs from multiple areas (Levin & Schrum, 2016). Distributive leadership is primarily associated with a set of interactive, interdependent practices and a “system of practice comprised of a collection of interacting components: leaders, followers, and situation. These three interacting components must be understood together because the system is more than the sum of the component parts or practices” (Spillane, 2005, p. 150).

An example of distributed leadership, in a school setting, revolves around the goal to improve literacy instruction:

The principal emphasizes goals and standards, keep the meeting moving, summarizes comments, and reminds participants of what is expected in their classrooms. The literacy coordinator identifies problems with literacy instruction, suggestions solutions and resources, and encourages teachers to present their ideas. The teacher leader describes his or her efforts to implement a teaching strategy that the literacy coordinator shared. The actions of followers (in this case, primarily classroom teachers) also contribute to defining leadership practice. They provide knowledge about a particular teaching strategy-knowledge that sometimes is used by leaders to illustrate a point about improving literacy instruction (Spillane, 2005, p. 145).

Distributed leadership assumes “a set of direction-setting and influence practices potentially enacted by people at all levels rather than a set of personal characteristics and attributes located in people at the top” (Leithwood, Jantzi & McElheron-Hopkins, 2006, p.20). Distributed leadership relies on interdependency and collaboration and rejects hierarchical leadership. As Harris (2003) describes, there lies a connection between distributed leadership and teacher leadership, “Teacher leadership essentially refers to the exercise of leadership by teachers regardless of position or designation. In summary, teacher leadership is centrally concerned with forms of empowerment and agency, which are also at the core of distributed leadership theory” (p.316).

In a study conducted by Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) in which they contacted more than 1,000 school leaders, teachers and staff, and conducted a survey of 8,000 principals and teachers to identify how leaders operated and how schools changed, they found, “Changing a school’s culture requires shared or distributed leadership, which engages many stakeholders in major improvement roles” (p.52). Distributed leadership is about collaboration, relationships, trust and support as everyone works together for the good of the school and the successful learning of the students.

Through empowering teachers, including them in decision making, recognizing their efforts, relinquishing control, sharing responsibility for failure, and giving credit for success, principals can send the message to the school community that teacher leadership is important and accepted in the school culture. (Anfara & Angelle, 2007, p.58)

## **Why is There a Need for Teacher Leadership?**

Elementary school principals have a multitude of responsibilities as leaders of a school. Principal leadership has transitioned from merely being managers of buildings to being instructional leaders, stewards of taxpayer dollars, new teacher onboarding facilitators, providers of teacher professional development and many more leadership responsibilities (Catano & Stronge, 2006, pg. 225-26). As Hallinger (2005) concludes, the effectiveness of a principal “is attained by finding the correct balance of these roles in the context of a school” (p.2). A shift exists in leadership roles due to the changing, global society:

Whereas, in the past, the job of school leader was considered as primarily managerial, the realities of our global society have shifted the focus from management (i.e. making decisions about how things should be done - the “nuts and bolts” of operations in order to sustain organizational efficiency) to leadership (i.e. making decisions about what should be done to improve an organization - visioning, planning, change and consensus building) (Trinidad & Normore, 2005, p.580).

According to Trinidad and Normore (2005), school leaders in less successful schools seem to perceive their role to be more that of a middle manager while leaders in highly successful schools view themselves as educational leaders who contribute heavily to school improvement and school effectiveness (p.580). Additionally, Mitchell and Castle (2005), delineate the difference between school leaders and other forms of leadership as school leadership focuses on instructional leadership. They write, “Instructional leadership deals with

the ways in which principals take on educational tasks. It is precisely this educational work that distinguishes school principals from other sorts of leaders” (Mitchell & Castle, p.411).

In a study in which O’Donnell and White (2005) surveyed 250 educators, perceptions of principal instructional leadership behaviors that focused on improving school learning climate were identified as predictors of student achievement. The relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement is often mediated by school-level factors such as school climate or classroom-level factors such as teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) identified 21 key leadership responsibilities of a principal and the extent to which the principal executes those responsibilities. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty’s summaries are listed in Table 5.

Table 5  
Responsibilities of principals

<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>The extent to which the principal . . .</i>
Culture	establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines
Discipline	protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their focus on teaching time
Resources	provides teachers with material and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their roles
Curriculum, instruction, assessment	is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices

Focus	establishes clear goals and keeps those goals at the forefront of the school's attention
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment	is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Contingent rewards	recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments
Communication	establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students
Outreach	is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
Input	demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff
Affirmation	recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failure
Relationship	demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff
Change agent	is willing to and actively challenges the status quo
Optimizer	inspires and leads new and challenging innovations
Ideals/beliefs	communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling
Monitors/evaluates	monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning
Flexibility	adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent

Situational awareness	is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems
Intellectual stimulation	ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture

Collaborative leaders recognize that in today's schools, one person cannot address the needs of all the stakeholders in a school community - staff, students, parents, and community. As Anfara and Angelle (2007) comment on the importance of empowering others "to lead alongside the principal builds collegiality and shares opportunities for active participation in the improvement of the school" (p.55).

Most of the literature concerning teacher leadership in schools often only addresses the teacher leaders' perception about leadership while overlooking the perceptions of principals (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p.461). As Wright (2008) stated in her study, principals are rarely asked about their perceptions of teacher leadership. In the study, Wright (2008) stated that principals often responded in generalities relating to benefits for students when asked to comment on what impact distributed leadership had on student achievement. Furthermore, she recommends that "principals need to deconstruct conscious and unconscious beliefs about leadership by reflecting on leadership practice through an investigation of lived routines and formally-designed structures" (pp. 26-27).



## **Teacher Leadership Definitions**

Because there are so many principals working in schools, there are just as many ways in which they define leadership, facilitate the development of teacher leaders, and sustain teacher leadership in their schools. Teacher leadership is essential for the present state of schools and the future of education. Teacher leadership can and should exist within the walls of a building but should also stretch to reach arenas of curriculum design, policy making, and creating a global network of connected educators. As Barnes, Camburn, Sanders, and Sebastian (2010) state, the “development of professional practice is a process in which learners become increasingly more competent performers in their complex working conditions” (p. 244).

The concept of teacher leadership entered school leadership some 40 years ago. Hatch, White, and Faigenbaum (2005) discussed four periods of teacher leadership, which at times overlap and depict a representation of the earliest conceptions of teacher leadership. In the first period, teachers were invited to formal teacher leadership positions as department heads whose primary responsibility is to compel teachers within their departments to be cooperative team-players (Little, 2003). The second period of teacher leadership was begun to empower individual teacher leaders because administrators began to recognize teachers for their specific professional knowledge (Hatch, et al., 2005). This period saw the expansion of teacher leadership to include expert positions, such as curriculum or staff developer (Little, 2003). The third period of teacher leadership included colleague support roles, such as mentor teachers (Hatch et al., 2005). Because colleague support roles offer opportunities for larger numbers of teachers to become leaders, power and authority are more evenly spread across the school. Finally, the fourth period of teacher leadership included a more distributed leadership model that is spread across a school

community, and is not necessarily designated through formal positions or by administrators (Hatch et al., 2005). Instead, “leadership is a fluid practice whereby teachers and administrators engage in leading and following, depending on the situation. In addition, distributed leadership is defined by how leaders act together, as well as the situation they must act within” (Bradley-Levine, 2011, p.248).

The definition of teacher leadership has evolved over the past decade. In a comprehensive review of two decades of research, teacher leadership can be defined in the following way:

After reflecting on the literature as a whole, we suggest that teacher leadership is the practice by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. Such leadership work involves three intentional developmental foci: individual development, collaboration or team development, and organization development (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, pp. 287-88).

Describing the specific actions of teacher leadership, Ackerman and Mackenzie (2006) write, “Teachers lead informally by revealing their classroom practices, sharing their expertise, asking questions of colleagues, mentoring new teachers, and modeling how teachers collaborate on issues of practice” (p.66). Similarly, Katzenmoyer and Moller (2009) also define teacher leadership by the actions teachers take. They state, “Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders;

influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept the responsibility for achieving the outcomes of leadership” (p.6).

For some, the path of leadership begins as teachers and moves to a principal role or even a role at the district level. However, teacher leadership does not always have to involve leaving the classroom. Leadership opportunities while still in the classroom serve as role models for their peers and students alike. Teacher leaders who are still in the classroom benefit the students, the staff members in a building, and the district as a whole (Berry, et al., 2013).

These different definitions of teacher leadership have been developed to identify and create leadership skills within the adults in the schools as well as providing an opportunity for more voices to have input on the decisions occurring in a larger school community. Providing an opportunity for more voices to have input on the larger school decisions will benefit students, staff, and the community as a whole.

There are several systematic barriers to developing teacher leaders in schools. These barriers include “the fact that teachers are overworked, frequently underpaid, their time for additional duties is finite, our current accountability system discourages innovation, and we typically do not reward teacher leadership-type activities” (Levin & Schrum, 2016, p.7). In addition, many teachers perceive they do not possess the necessary leadership skills and this perception may limit teachers from assuming teacher leadership roles and they perceive that most of their work is done informally through collaboration (Anfara & Angelle, 2007; Katzenmoyer & Moller, 2009). Additionally, Katzenmoyer and Moller (2009) describe the “tall poppy syndrome” or the “crab bucket” mentality. This occurs when teachers who do not want to lead or do not want others to lead, engage in either active or passive efforts to deter

these leadership efforts. Often, the teachers are afraid to step up in fear of losing support from their friends and colleagues.

As a result, Levin and Schrum (2016) conclude teachers need school and district level leaders to create situations and a culture that allows teacher leadership to be supported, recognized and rewarded. In addition, professional learning and development for teacher leaders is an important aspect to help teacher leaders grow and develop. “Teacher leadership is the responsibility of not just teachers who want to be teacher leaders, but of all school and district leaders, and other teachers as well” (Levin & Schrum, 2016, p.27).

Lambert (1998) developed a rubric for emerging teacher leadership. This rubric was developed while serving as the Director of the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of California-Hayward, in conjunction with K-12 educators, graduate students and faculty. This rubric demonstrates a continuum of learning across four indicators: adult development, dialogue, collaboration and organizational change. The rubric can be found in the table below.

Table 6  
Rubric of Emerging Teacher Leadership

From -----> To			
<b>Adult Development</b>			
Defines self in relation to others in the community. The opinions of others, particularly those in authority, are highly important.	Defines self as independent from the group, separating needs and goals from others. Does not often see the need for group interaction.	Understands self as interdependent with others in the school community, seeking feedback from others and counsel from self.	Engages in colleagues in acting out of a <i>sense of self</i> and shared values, forming interdependent learning communities.

Does not recognize the need for self-reflection. Tends to implement strategies as learned without making adjustments arising from reflective practice.

Personal reflection leads to refinement of strategies and routines. Does not often share reflections with others. Focuses on argument for own ideas. Does not support systems that are designed to enhance reflective practice.

Engages in self-reflection as a means of improving practices. Models these processes for others in the school community. Holds conversations that share views and develops understanding of each other's assumptions.

Evokes reflective in others. Develops and supports a culture for *self-reflection* that may include collaborative planning, peer coaching, action research, and reflective writing.

Absence of ongoing evaluation of own teaching. Does not yet systematically connect teacher and student behaviors.

Self-evaluation is not often shared with others; however, responsibility for problems or errors is typically ascribed to others such as students or family.

Highly self-evaluative and introspective. Accepts shared responsibility as a natural part of a school community. No need for blame.

Enables others to be *self-evaluative* and introspective, leading toward self- and shared responsibility.

In need of effective strategies to demonstrate respect and concern for others. Is polite and congenial, yet primarily focuses on own needs.

Exhibits respectful attitude toward others in most situations, usually private. Can be disrespectful in public debate. Gives little feedback to others.

Consistently shows respect and concern for all members of the school community. Validates and respects qualities in and opinions of others.

Encourages and supports others in being *respectful, caring, trusted members of the school community*. Initiates recognition of the ideas and achievements of colleagues as part of an overall goal of collegial empowerment.

### **Dialogue**

Interactions with others are primarily social, not based on shared goals or group learning.

Communicates with others around logistical issues/problems. Sees goals as individually set for each classroom, not

Communicates well with individuals and groups in the community as a means of creating and sustaining relationships and

*Facilitates effective dialogue* among members of the school community in order to build relationships and focus the dialogue

	actively participating in efforts to focus on common goals.	focusing on teaching and learning. Actively participates in dialogue.	on teaching and learning.
Does not pose questions of or seek to influence the group. Participation often resembles consent or compliance.	Makes personal point of view, although not assumptions, explicit. When opposed to ideas, often asks impeding questions that can derail or diver the dialogue.	Asks questions and provides insights that reflect an understanding of the need to surface assumptions and address the goals of the community.	Facilitates communication among colleagues by <i>asking provocative questions or facilitative questions</i> that open productive dialogue.
Does not actively seek information or new professional knowledge that challenges current practices. Shares knowledge with others only when requested.	Attends registered staff development activities that are planned by the school or district. Occasionally shares knowledge during formal and informal gatherings. Does not seek knowledge that challenges status quo.	Possess current knowledge and information about teaching and learning. Actively seeks to use that understanding to alter teaching practices. Studies own practice.	Works with others to <i>construct knowledge through multiple forms of inquiry</i> , action research, examination of disaggregated school data, insights from others and from the outside research community.
Responds to situations in similar ways; expects predictable responses from others. Is sometimes confused by variations from expected norms.	Responds to situations in different though predictable ways. Expects consistency from those in authority and from self.	Responds to situations with open-mindedness and flexibility; welcomes multiple perspectives from others. Alters own assumptions during dialogue when evidence is persuasive.	Promotes <i>open-mindedness and flexibility</i> in others; invites multiple perspectives and interpretations as a means of challenging old assumptions and framing new actions.
<b>Collaboration</b> Decision making is based on individual	Promotes individual autonomy in	Actively participates in shared decision	Promotes <i>collaborative</i>

wants and needs rather than those of the group as a whole.	classroom decision making. Relegates school decision making to the principal.	making. Volunteers to follow through on group decisions.	<i>decision making</i> that provides options to meet the diverse individual and group needs of the school community.
Sees little value in team-building, although seeks membership in the group. Will participate, but may not connect activities with larger school goals.	Does not seek to participate in roles or settings that would involve team-building. Considers most team-building activities to be pate “touchy-feely” and frivolous.	Is an active participant in team building, seeking roles and opportunities to contribute to the work of the team. Sees “teamness” as central to the community.	Engages colleagues in <i>team-building activities</i> that develop mutual trust, and promotes collaborative decision making.
Sees problems as caused by the actions of others, e.g., students or parents; or blames self. Uncertain regarding the specifics of own involvement.	Interprets problems from own perspective. Plays the role of observer and critic, not accepting responsibility for emerging issues and dilemmas. Considers most problems to be a function of poor management.	Acknowledges that problems involve all members of the community. Actively seeks to define problems and proposes resolutions or approaches that address the situation. Finding blame is not relevant.	Engages colleagues in identifying and acknowledging problems. Acts with others to <i>frame problems and seek resolutions</i> . Anticipates situations that may cause recurrent problems.
Does not recognize or avoids conflict in the school community. Misdirects frustrations into withdrawal or personal hurt. Avoids talking about issues that could evoke conflict.	Does not shy away from conflict. Engages conflict as a means of surfacing competing ideas, approaches. Understands that conflict is intimidating to many.	Anticipates and seeks to resolve or intervene in conflict. Actively tries to channel conflict into problem-solving endeavors. Is not intimidated by conflict, although would not seek it.	<i>Surfaces, addresses, and mediates conflict</i> within the school and with parents and community. Understands that negotiating conflict is necessary for personal and school change.

### Organizational Change

Focuses on present situations and issues; seldom plans for either short- or long-term futures. Expects certainty.	Demonstrates forward thinking in some curriculum for own classroom. Usually does not connect own planning to the future of the school.	Develops forward-thinking skills in working with others and planning for school improvements. Future goals based on shared values and vision.	Provides for and creates opportunities to engage in others in <i>forward (visionary) thinking and planning</i> based on shared core values.
Maintains a low profile during school change, basically uninvolved in group processes. Attempts to comply with changes. Expects compliance from others.	Questions status quo; suggests that others need to change to reestablish the “good old days.” Selects those changes that reflect personal philosophies. Opposes or ignores practices that require a school-wide focus.	Shows enthusiasm and involvement in school change. Leads by example. Explores possibilities and implements changes for both personal and professional development.	Initiates <i>actions toward innovative change</i> ; motivates and draws others into the action for school and district improvements. Encourages others to <i>implement practices that support school-wide learning</i> . Provides follow-up planning and coaching support.
Culturally unaware. “I treat everyone the same.” Stage of naiveté to sociopolitical implications of race, culture, ethnic, and gender issues.	Growing insensitivity to political implications of diversity. Acknowledges that cultural differences exist and influence individuals and organizations.	Acceptance and understanding; “aha” level. Has developed an appreciation of own cultural identities and a deeper appreciation/respect for cultural differences. Applies understanding in classroom and school.	Commitment to value of building on <i>cultural differences</i> . Actively seeks to involve others in designing programs and policies that support the development of a multicultural world.
Attends to students in his or her own classroom. Possessive of children and space. Has not secured a	Concerned for the preparation of children in previous grades. Critical of preparation of children and	Developmental view of children translates into concern for all children in the school (not only	Works with colleagues to develop programs and policies that take <i>holistic view of children’s</i>



developmental view of children.	readiness of children to meet established standards.	those in own classroom) and their future performances in later educational settings.	<i>development</i> (e.g., multigraded classrooms, multiyear teacher assignments, parent education, follow-up studies).
Works alongside new teachers. Is cordial although does not offer assistance. Lacks confidence in giving feedback to others.	Shares limited information with new teachers, mainly information that pertains to administrative functions in the school (e.g., attendance accounting, grade reports). Does not offer to serve as a master teacher.	Collaborates with, supports, and gives feedback to new and student teachers. Often serves as a master or cooperating teacher.	Takes <i>responsibility for the support and development of systems for new and student teachers</i> . Develops collaborative programs with school, district, and universities.
Displays little interest in the selection of new teachers. Assumes that they will be appointed by the district of those otherwise in authority.	Assumes that district will recruit and appoint teachers. Has not proposed a more active role to the teachers association.	Becomes actively involved in the setting of criteria and selection of new teachers.	Advocates to the schools, district, and teacher association the <i>development of hiring practices</i> that involve teachers, parents, and students in the processes. <i>Promotes the hiring of diverse candidates</i> .

## Teacher Leadership Standards

Just as teachers work from a set of standards to develop lessons and assess student learning, and just as building level administrators have the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, teacher leader standards have recently been developed by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium. The Consortium is made up of a variety of education

stakeholders, including union representatives, teachers, school administrators, policy organizations, and leaders in higher education. These standards are intended to:

codify, promote, and support teacher leadership as a vehicle for transforming schools to meet the needs of 21st-century learners. Rather than serve as a comprehensive job description for teacher leaders, the standards instead describe seven domains of leadership. Each domain is further developed and supported by a list of functions that a teacher leader who is an expert in that domain might perform (“Teacher Leader Standards,” 2012).

The standards broken down into seven domains that encompass critical elements of teacher leadership. Table 7 shows each domain including the actions and expectations of teacher leadership within that domain

Table 7  
Actions and Expectations of Teacher Leadership

Domain	Actions and Expectations of Teacher Leadership
Domain I: Fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning	The teacher leader is well versed in adult learning theory and uses that knowledge to create a community responsibility within his or her school. In promoting this collaborative culture among fellow teachers, administrators, and other school leaders, the teacher leader ensures improvement in educator instruction, and consequently, student learning.
Domain II: Accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning	The teacher leader keeps abreast of the latest research about teaching effectiveness and student learning, and implements best practices where appropriate. He or she models the use of systematic inquiry as a critical component of teachers’ ongoing learning and development.
Domain III: Promoting	The teacher leader understands that the processes of teaching and

professional learning for continuous improvement	learning are constantly evolving. The teacher leaders designs and facilitates job-embedded professional development opportunities that are aligned with school improvement goals.
Domain IV: Facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning	The teacher leader possesses a deep understanding of teaching and learning, and models an attitude of continuous learning and reflective practice for colleagues. The teacher leader works collaboratively with fellow teachers to constantly improve instructional practices.
Domain V: Promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement	The teacher leader is knowledgeable about the design of assessments, both formative and summative. He or she works with colleagues to analyze data and interpret results to inform goals and to improve student learning.
Domain VI: Improving outreach and collaboration with families and community	The teacher leader understands the impact that families, cultures, and communities have on student learning. As a result, the teacher leader seeks to promote a sense of partnership among these different groups toward the common goal of excellent education.
Domain VII: Advocating for student learning and the profession	The teacher leader understands the landscape of education policy and can identify key players at the local, state, and national levels. The teacher leader advocates for the teaching profession and for policies that benefit student learning.

(Levin & Schrum, 2016, p. 10)

### Current Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher Leaders

In a review of teacher leadership, Raffanti (2008) identified three key areas relevant to understanding the roles and responsibilities of teacher leadership: context, skill and challenges.

Within a school setting, teacher leaders will often take on roles and responsibilities that could include the following (Levin & Schrum, 2016, p. 9):

Table 8  
Examples of Teacher Leadership

Examples of instructional leadership	Examples of organizational leadership	Examples of professional leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing informal and/or benchmark</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leading PLC meetings</li> <li>Serving as a grade-level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serving on district or state committees -</li> </ul>

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assessments	or department chair	assessment, textbook, technology etc.
• Tutoring students	• Coaching student groups/clubs/sports	• Being a union representative
• Developing instructional units	• Attending parent-teacher organization meetings	• Presenting at conferences
• Developing question sets for leveled books	• Interviewing potential new administrators or teachers	• Participating in district-level orientation for new teachers, PD, curriculum revision groups, etc.
• Mentoring new teachers	• Organizing a special event - author visit, field day, science fair, book sale, etc.	• Joining online teacher advocacy groups such as The Center for Teaching Quality
• Trying out a new program, strategy, technology, or teaching method	• Evaluating writing or other benchmark tests	• Blogging about issues related to teaching
• Mentoring preservice teachers	• Serving on the textbook selection committee	• Writing articles or books to share your expertise
• Arranging for field trips or guest speakers	• Developing the class schedule	• Advocating for the profession by writing letters or being active on Twitter or TeacherTube
• Organizing a service learning project	• Starting a book club	• Developing a website to share ideas with other teachers
• Mentoring a senior's graduation project	• Organizing or reorganizing the book room, math manipulatives, etc.	• Presenting webinars for a professional organization like SimpleK12 or Growth Models
• Leading a Friday "special" club	• Fund raising and/or soliciting donations from business partners	• Posting videotapes online to share your teaching with new teachers and teacher education programs
• Writing a grant for a special project for new materials	• Mainstreaming the school's website	
• Volunteering to teach an online class	• Starting a version of Japanese Lesson Study, or a peer coaching/peer mentoring collaborative	
• Conducting model lessons	• Serving as a lead teacher, curriculum facilitator, or reading or math coach	
• Inviting teachers into your classroom to observe		
• Undertaking the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) process		

According to Katzenmoyer and Moller (2009), teacher leadership is often demonstrated in one of three ways: through teaching and learning, by influencing school-wide policies and programs, or through communications and community efforts. These three ways in which teacher leadership can be demonstrated can occur formally or informally both within and

outside of school. Table 9 highlights examples of teacher leadership inside and outside of the school setting, in both a formal and informal way of leading.

Table 9  
Formal and informal leadership examples

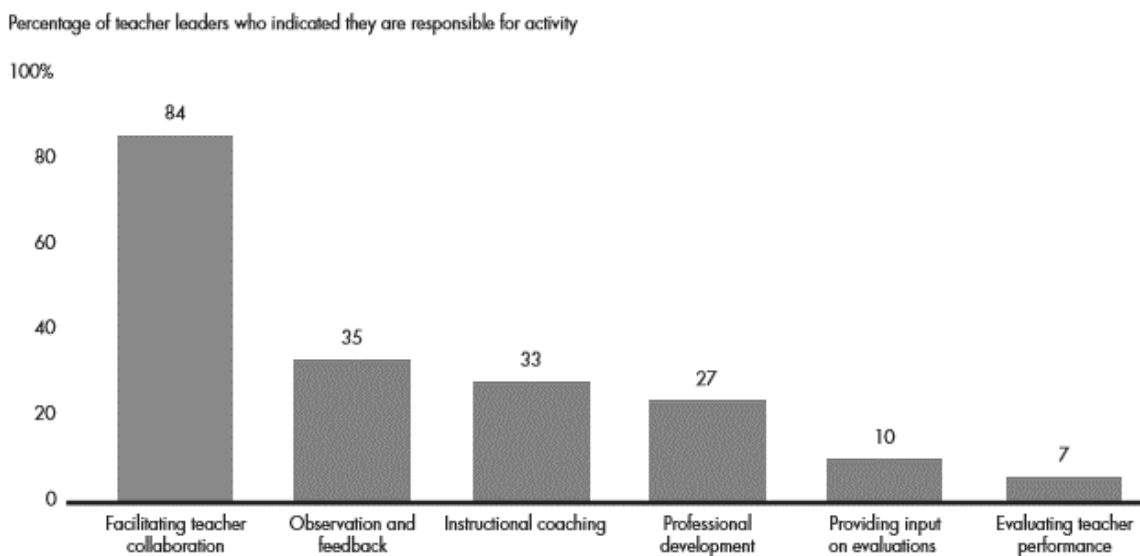
Formal teacher leadership in school	Informal teacher leadership in school	Teacher leadership outside of school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving on the school improvement committee or leadership team</li> <li>• Creating school-wide policies for student conduct, attendance, grading, homework, etc.</li> <li>• Initiating and leading co-curricular activities</li> <li>• Mentoring and coaching new teachers</li> <li>• Assisting in hiring new staff</li> <li>• Organizing a cross-age tutoring program</li> <li>• Leading professional development activities by either making a presentation or sharing a successful practice or strategy</li> <li>• Overseeing the school website</li> <li>• Developing a school-wide process to monitor student progress from grade to grade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranging social programs for faculty and staff</li> <li>• Instituting student-led parent conferences</li> <li>• Experimenting with flipped instruction</li> <li>• Encouraging student and/or teacher volunteer service activities</li> <li>• Providing families with information about how to support student learning</li> <li>• Initiating a family reading program in the school library</li> <li>• Communicating positive information to parents</li> <li>• Organizing a parent/family night to explain new curriculum</li> <li>• Organizing a parent/family information session about student development issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scout leader or co leader</li> <li>• Sunday school leader - develop curriculum, and organize volunteer teachers</li> <li>• Neighborhood watch chair</li> <li>• Leadership position and/or committee chair in civic organizations</li> <li>• Religious leader and other leadership positions at religious institution</li> <li>• Heading up a fundraising event for a health organization</li> <li>• Organizing a silent auction as a fund raiser</li> <li>• Coaching a sports team</li> </ul>

In 2013, the Iowa State Department of Education launched a statewide initiative to invest \$150 million a year in promoting teacher leadership roles with a stated goal of retaining the best teachers. This state program intends to “create better long-term professional

development opportunities and promote collaboration among teachers so they can learn from each other. It increased compensation levels and required that each school make a good-faith effort to place at least 25% of its workforce in the new leadership roles” (Bierly, Doyle & Smith, 2016, p.18).

According to a survey of more than 4,000 teachers, assistant principals and principals, Bierly, Doyle and Smith (2016) identify the following as the top six activities that teacher leaders participate in through their role as a teacher leader. As evidenced in figure 2, teacher leaders primarily are associated with roles that involve the development of their colleagues through collaboration, observation and feedback, coaching, providing professional development, and evaluating teacher performances.

Figure 2  
Teacher leadership activities (Bierly, Doyle, & Smith, 2016, p. 20)



Systems are working hard to expand the leadership capacity in their schools by investing in a long list of different leadership roles. In one study, it was discovered that

“schools averaged 12 additional leadership positions for each principal in the system” (Bierly et al., 2016, p.18). Schools use these positions to retain strong teachers by recognizing them, rewarding them and giving them new opportunities to grow. The leadership roles included department chairs, grade-level chairs, mentor teacher, model teacher, PLC lead teachers and other leadership roles (Bierly et al., 2016).

### **The Emerging Trend of Females in Leadership Roles in Education**

As of late, more and more women are seeking those higher-level school leadership positions, jockeying for the seat as hard and fast as their male counterparts, especially for the school principalship. The United States Department of Education (1997) cites an increase from 25% of public school administrators being women in 1988 to 34% in 1994. Although this increase begins to show progress in women obtaining leadership roles, when compared with the percentages of teaching roles held by teachers, there is a vast disconnect. In 1991, women accounted for 68.3 percent of the teaching population, while only 31.2% of administrators were female (Hammer & Rohr, 1994). More recently, in 2009, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2010, the majority of school administrators—62.6%—were female. In August 2013, the percentage of public school principals who were female was 52 percent overall, 64 percent in primary schools, 42 percent in middle schools, 30 percent in high schools, and 40 percent in combined schools (Bitterman, et al, 2013).

With this shift in educational administration to include women becoming more and more prevalent, it is important to understand some of the gender issues surrounding this theme. According to the meta-analysis performed by Eagly, Karau, and Johnson (1992), the findings

demonstrate that female principals act more democratically-versus-autocratically and are more likely than male principals to treat teachers and other organizations subordinates as colleagues and equals and invite higher levels of collaborative efforts in decision making. Male principals conversely use less of a collaborative style and tend to be more dominating and directive, compared to their female counterparts (Eagly et al., 1992; Rosener, 1990).

Shrage (1999) reported work conducted by brain researchers Raquel Gur and Ruben Gur who found that female leaders might be more sensitive to emotional cues and verbal nuances than male leaders. Shrage (1999) also suggests that female leaders are more likely to use verbal communication for relationship building and emotional support compared to male leaders. In addition, female leaders are more likely to choose a relationship-oriented leadership style while male leaders focus more on disseminating information and demonstrating competence (Shrage, 1999).

It should be stated, however, that, while there are arguments suggesting gender differences in leadership style, there are also arguments that there are no gender differences in leadership style or behavior. Grant (1988) conducted a literature review from which she concluded that there are apparently few, if any, personality or behavioral differences between men and women managers. Grant suggested that, as women move up the corporate ladder, their identification with the male model of managerial success becomes evident. In fact, according to Grant, some of the women managers consequently reject even the few managerial feminine traits they may have earlier endorsed.

Although research exists which demonstrates the differences in male and female leadership styles, research also exists that focuses less on the gender differences and on the context in which the leaders exist. Collard (2001), in a qualitative study of gender differences in



schools, cautions using gender differences as solitary and unilateral influences. With regards to gender issues, “it is clear that issues about the gender of leaders cannot be fully understood without references to organisational (sic) culture” (Oshagbemi & Gill, 2003; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

Pounder and Coleman (2002) reviewed some of the current thinking on women and leadership, drawing on general and educational management literature. They found that, despite some evidence of a growing willingness of women to take up leadership positions in the field, educational leadership is still a male dominated field, especially in the superintendency. Their conclusion is that some of the factors that may account for differences in leadership styles include national culture, socialization, organizational demographics, and the nature of the organization.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Introduction**

As principals today have many responsibilities, various forms of teacher leadership have become widespread. In the literature review, three examples of leadership styles were explored. These three leadership styles [transformational, servant and distributed leadership] possess characteristics that allow for the development of teacher leadership within schools.

To address the research questions, I used the qualitative methodology of in-depth interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This approach helped me learn about the educational experiences and perceptions of this particular group of female principals by eliciting an extensive verbatim narrative from them. According to Seidman, “in-depth interviewing enables researchers to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of others” (Roulston, 2010, p.17). In this case, “others” included a number of female elementary principals. This chapter considered the underlying methodological assumptions that guided the research as well as the specific research methods to be used.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The concept of "teacher leadership" is a concept that although recent efforts to research this topic, the research on the definition of and effectiveness of teacher leadership remains unclear among scholars and practitioners. Although modes of servant, transformational, and distributed leadership, such as teacher leadership, may assist in the creation of a leadership culture in schools, the mere fact of how teacher leaders are identified, chosen, or recruited for leadership roles in schools can vary from principal to principal and from school to school. As the school leaders, principals are given a unique

position in being able to foster and sustain teacher leadership, but too little is known about their perceptions of the concept.

### **Research Design**

A pilot study was conducted in 2015 which led to the overall design of this research study. Because this study sought principals' definitions and perceptions of the widely- varied and defined concept of "teacher leadership," this study necessitated a qualitative design. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), a qualitative study is “pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (p.2). Qualitative research is the most suitable method for this inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Miller and Glassner argue that a qualitative study will “provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds” (as cited in Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.140). Additionally, “qualitative work is judged more on its freshness – its ability to discover new themes and new explanations – than on its generalizability” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.16).

Moreover, this study was a multicase naturalistic inquiry, seeking perceptions derived from lived experiences. “Naturalists accept that there is a reality that cannot be measured directly, only perceived by people, each of whom views it through the lens of his or her prior experience, knowledge and expectations. That lens affects what people see and how they interpret what they find” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 15). Within the naturalist paradigm is the model of interpretive constructionism, which argues that “the core of understanding is learning about what people make of the world around them, how people interpret what they encounter, and how they assign meanings and values to events or objects” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 19). These constructionist approaches are concerned with the lenses through which people view

events as well as the expectations and meanings that they bring to a situation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

This was a qualitative study utilizing in-depth, semi-structured interviews. According to Adams and van Manen, “the focus of interviews is to elicit the ‘direct description of a particular situation or event as it is lived through without offering casual explanations or interpretive generalizations’” (as cited in Roulston, 2010, p. 17). As Roulston (2010) further describes the purpose of the interview is to “generate detailed and in-depth descriptions of the human experience” (Roulston, 2010, p.16). The objective of these interviews sought to understand the “feelings, perceptions, and understandings” (Roulston, 2010, p.16) of the female elementary school principal interviewees.

In addition to the semi-structured interviewing, responsive interviewing also occurred. This style of interviewing “emphasizes flexibility of design and expects the interviewer to change questions in response to what he or she is learning. Responsive interviewing accepts and adjust to the personalities of both conversational partners” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.7). As part of this model of interviewing, the assumption is made that the experiences of people are true and by sharing these experiences, the interviewer can enter the world of the interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The role of the researcher is to “gather narratives, descriptions, and interpretations from an array of conversational partners and put them together in a reasoned way that re-creates a culture or describes a process or set of events in a way that participants would recognize as real” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.7).

During the interview, Seidman describes the role of the interviewer by stating, “the interviewer takes a neutral but interested stance, and the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is sometimes described as pedagogical, in that the role of the interviewer is to

be a student of the interviewee, learning as much about the topic of questioning as possible (as cited by Roulston, 2010, p.17).

Throughout the interview, open questions were asked to “provide broad parameters within which interviewees can formulate answers in their words concerning topics specified by the interviewer” (Roulston, 2010, p.12). In addition to the open questions, probes were used when conducting the interviews. These probes helped to further elicit and clarify responses from each interviewee (Roulston, 2010; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The in-depth format also “permits the researcher to explore fully all the factors that underpin participants' answers: reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs. This furnishes the explanatory evidence that is an important element of qualitative research” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.141). As Roulston (2010) points out, the probes should be asked in a manner that does not disrupt the flow of the interview while exercising reservation in joining the conversation.

The semi-structured, responsive interview protocol were used during the interviews. This semi-structured, responsive interview protocol served as a guide which includes a number of questions. Although the interview guide has the same starting point and has the same questions, the order of the interviews varied based upon the responses of the interviewee and how the interviewer asked probing follow up questions (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Roulston, 2010).

As the discussion above suggested, in-depth interviewing enables researchers to uncover the subjective truth about the ways participants perceive their experiences. For my study, these experiences related to female elementary principals' perceptions on teacher leadership.

A case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Yin defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). These definitions highlight the importance of what Merriam (2009) called a “bounded system” or the definition of the delimitations of what is being studied: the case. The case represents the unit of study, which is a phenomenon or an entity around which there are boundaries, a finite number of participants, and data collection where the researcher is interested in “insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 2009, p.42).

This case study research of four elementary school principals in a district located in the Midwest region of the United States allowed for the investigation of whether the development, facilitation, and sustainment of teacher leadership within a real-life context (elementary schools) is consciously planned and coordinated by the school leader. The evidence-based inquiry founded upon interviews and transcription analysis contributed to the generation of knowledge that can potentially guide current principals in successfully developing teacher leadership in their schools.

For this study, qualitative case study was selected as the most appropriate methodology for exploring the research problem. Merriam explains how case studies are similar to other forms of qualitative research, as “qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive,” (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). Qualitative case study methodology allowed me to thoughtfully examine the stories and experiences of the small group of cases and explore how

female elementary school principals defined, facilitated and sustained teacher leadership roles within their schools.

Since my study incorporates more than one case, it is a multicase study, and Stake (2006) discusses the value of analyzing the multiple cases collectively as well as individually:

In multicase study research, the single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases. The individual cases share a common characteristic or condition. The cases in the collection are somehow categorically bound together. They may be members of a group or examples of a phenomenon. Let us call this group, category, or phenomenon a 'quintain' (pp. 5-6).

Merriam (2009) includes a discussion of how multicase studies naturally include more variation within the different cases, and the inclusion of more than one case results in enhanced external validity or generalizability of the findings:

The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be . . . The inclusion of multiple cases is, in fact, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of your findings" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 49-50).

## **Research Questions**

In order to explore principals' perceptions of teacher leadership, it is important to ask elementary principals to define teacher leadership, explain how leadership is fostered in their schools, and explain how leadership can be sustained and continued over time. The following research questions served this study:

- 1) How do female elementary school principals define 'teacher leadership?

2) How do female elementary school principals and school districts facilitate the development of teacher leadership in schools?

3) How do female elementary school principals encourage teacher leadership and sustain existing teacher leadership structures to address school-wide goals?

### Setting/Context

This study took place in one school district located in the Midwest region of the United States. This school district contains seventeen schools (one preschool, ten elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools, and one alternative day treatment facility). Within these seventeen schools, this school district has 11,533 students and 867 certified staff members.

When examining the demographics of the students within this school district, the following is noted: 69.6% of the students identified their race as White, 11.5% of the students identified their race as African American, 9.2% of the students identified their race as Hispanic, 4.7% of the students identified their race as multi-racial, 3.2% of the students identified their race as Asian, 1.4% of the students identified their race as Pacific Islander, and 0.4% of the students identified their race as Native American.

Over the past six years, there have been some slight changes in the racial demographics of the student population. Changes are noted in the table below:

Table 10  
School District Racial Demographics

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Multi-Racial	3.5%	4.0%	4.2%	4.4%	4.6%	4.7%
Pacific Islander	0.9%	1.0%	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%
Native American	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%



Asian	3.4%	3.3%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
Hispanic	8.6%	8.7%	9.0%	9.4%	9.3%	9.2%
African American	10.5%	10.7%	10.4%	10.2%	10.7%	11.5%
White	72.5%	71.7%	71.5%	71.1%	70.5%	69.6%

In addition to the racial demographics of the district located in the Midwest region of the United States, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced meals was 28.8%. Student mobility is also a demographic and it is noted that 13.0% of current district elementary students were not students in the school district during the 2015-2016 school year. It is to be noted that the participants in this study have not had engaged in professional development that specifically addressed the development of teacher leadership.

### **Participants**

For this study, I interviewed four female principals who I refer to as Principal Angie, Principal Betty, Principal Cathy and Principal Debby. These principal interviews occurred in the fall of 2016. This study focused on a small group of four principals selected from one school district located in the Midwest region of the United States. As the number of female elementary principals continues to rise and outnumbers the number of male elementary principals, the principals selected for this study were female to gain a wide range of female experiences and perspectives. Access to the participants were made through personal connections and contacts through professional organizations.

I obtained permission to perform research with these principals by submitting an application to the Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department of the School District. The application explained the aims of my study and the procedures I plan to use. I received approval

from the district officials and gained entry to the schools by consulting with the principals. I sent an email to each principal to explain the purpose of the study and the potential benefits and possible risks of the study. About a week after sending the email, I met with the principals to discuss their willingness to allow me to conduct the study with them. After each principal had agreed, I discussed logistics (e.g., place and time for interviews). After each principal had agreed to participate in the study, I also sent them an electronic questionnaire to gather initial data points that helped direct the questions for the initial interviews.

### **Instruments**

Prior to meeting face to face with each principal participant, the principals completed the questionnaire survey electronically as shown in Appendix D. I analyzed the survey results to understand the demographics of each participant and used some of the data to help guide the questions for the initial interviews.

Each principal participated in two individual interviews; one initial interview at the beginning of the semester and one follow-up interview at the end of the semester after the initial interview data was transcribed.

I asked each participant a series of planned interview questions to collect data (see Appendix E). These individual, semi-structured interviews provided me with data for analysis. In addition, follow-up questions or probes were asked in order to discover additional information and clarify concepts for further analysis, validating the participants' responses. As Rubin and Rubin (2012) explain, in-depth, qualitative, responsive interviews provide a researcher with rich, detailed information through exploration of the interviewee's experiences, and they also allow for fluidity of the interviewer's questions and the interviewee's responses. The individual

interviews were audio-recorded to allow for a detailed analysis. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to increase accuracy.

### **Data Collection**

This study involves semi-structured, audio-recorded qualitative interviews and analytic memos in order to collect data. Since listening to audio-recorded dialogues prior to transcription is an opportunity for analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), the interviews were thoroughly reviewed before and after being transcribed. The emphasis on “depth, nuance and the interviewee's own language as a way of understanding meaning implies that interview data needs to be captured in its natural form. This means that interview data is generally tape recorded, since note taking by the researcher would change the form of data” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 142). While listening to the audio recorded interviews, notes were taken as a way to categorize the data, identify patterns, and analyze themes. These notes were then reflected on in analytic memos.

### **Data Analysis**

At the conclusion of the interview, the responses were listened to and transcribed to ensure all the information was accurately recorded. The transcript of the interviews (including questions and responses) were then read three additional times to identify any patterns or common themes. This approach to analyzing the qualitative data can be described as content analysis

in which both the content and context of documents are analyzed: themes are identified, with the researcher focusing on the way the theme is treated or presented and the

frequency of its occurrence. The analysis is then linked to 'outside variables' such as the gender and role of the contributor (Berelson and Robson, as cited by Ritchie & Lewis, 2013, p.200).

The analysis of the data was both inductive and deductive. Inductive coding is not used to “search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypothesis researchers hold before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built upon the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together” (Bogdan & Knopp Biklen, 2015, p.6). The analysis of each participant’s data was inductive in the way it first seeks to find recurring themes in the female principal’s definition, facilitation and sustainability of teacher leadership.

Initial coding was used to identify themes and patterns that arose when looking at the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Gale et al., 2013; Hycner, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Saldaña, 2013; Thomas, 2006). Glaser (1978) describes the intent for initial coding as “the starting point to see the direction in which to take [this] study” (p.56). I utilized a line-by-line coding process for coding the interview transcripts, as recommended by Charmaz (2002). As each transcript was reviewed and coded, I initially coded each participant’s responses using process codes (e.g., shared leadership, belief, empowering, decision makers, lifelong learners, relational, and key skills and strengths). These process codes may or may not have evolved into categories or themes of the data as the analysis continued.

Using the conceptual framework and literature review to inform my analysis, I deductively coded my data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Gale et al., 2013; Hycner, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Saldaña, 2013). Once initially coded, the data was axial coded as a way to visually represent specific themes and categories. “The ‘axis’ of axial coding is a

category (like the axis of a wooden wheel with extended spokes) discerned from the initial coding. This method relates categories to subcategories and specifies the properties and dimensions of a category” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 218). During the axial coding, the focus was “placed on the emergent and emerging codes themselves, along with the categories’ properties and dimensions (Saldaña, 2013, p. 221). I was attentive to each principal’s experiences which led her to become a building principal, her definition of teacher leadership, how she facilitated teacher leadership in the school and how she has sustained that level of teacher leadership with the school community.

During the coding process, analytic memos were used during data analysis as a way to critically reflect on my thinking and make connections to theory. Memos helped gather analytic thinking about the collected data, and ease the process of critical analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Saldaña, 2013). According to Saldaña (2013), the purposes of analytic memo writing are to document and reflect on “your coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in your data – all possibly leading toward theory” (p. 41). Lastly, an audit trail was used during data analysis to record and document processes and changes.

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

The interviews were recorded and transcribed to increase accuracy. All of the interviews were analyzed for discrepancies. The analysis was done both by me and a second coder, a graduate student at the University of Kansas, to ensure the coding was credible and identified the same themes and patterns. The second coder was provided a copy of the transcripts and asked to see if the four themes I identified (shared leadership, belief that all teachers can be leaders, identifying key skills and strengths of teachers, and relational leadership) were evident as she

read through the transcripts and coded the data herself. The second coder identified the following themes when reviewing the transcripts: shared leadership, belief that all teachers can be leaders, empowering teachers to be decision makers, and teachers and leaders being lifelong learners.

In addition, all data collected for this study was compared with the relevant literature, as this helps to ensure credibility and reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the follow-up interview, I showed the interviewees the transcript of the first interview and allowed them the opportunity to correct or add to the transcription, referred to as member checking. Saldaña, (2013) referred to member checking as “consulting [with] the participants themselves during analysis ... as a way of validating the findings thus far” (pp.35-36). Member checking occurs when participants of the study are invited to examine a draft of the case analysis and provide feedback to ensure accuracy and usefulness (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Saldaña, 2013). After the data for this study were transcribed, coded, and analyzed, individual case narratives were offered to each participant so they had an opportunity to reflect and comment on the findings. In addition, the interviewees had the opportunity to exclude any information from the transcript.

With this qualitative interview study, I examined the principal participants’ experiences as they describe their own journey leading to becoming an elementary principal, define teacher leadership, describe how they facilitate and sustain teacher leadership in their elementary schools. I applied these insights to help frame future research and practice regarding principals’ perceptions about the role of teacher leaders in elementary schools.

Furthermore, with credibility and transferability my study met the authenticity criterial (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Wherein, all the data gathered were “solicited and honored” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 245), during the interview and evaluation process. My role, according to Guba

and Lincoln (1989) was “to seek out, and communicate, all such constructions and to explicate the ways in which such constructions and their underlying value systems are in conflict” (p. 246). Each individual, according to their experiences had ideas and thoughts that were different from the other participants. It was my job as the researcher to find these beliefs, identify how they were related to their experiences, and to stay true to their experiences when I articulated this within my research.

To ensure that the inferences and conclusions made in this study are appropriate, the study utilized validity strategies to clarify the researcher bias and to describe and convey the research findings. To accomplish this, reflection and clarification of any researcher bias was included. The description of each individual case is very detailed, including information about the setting and experience of each participant. Intentional efforts were made to ensure that the narrative findings of the study are honest, realistic, and valid.

Ethical concerns arise in qualitative research with respect to the confidentiality of the study participants. This study adhered to the guidelines of informed consent and protection from harm. Both were key factors that govern research of human subjects (Yin, 2014). Before I collected my data, I submitted my research design, interview protocols and consent forms to the Institutional Review Boards at the University of Kansas to ensure that I was meeting the expectations for research with human subjects. This study posed a minimal risk to participants and participants did not receive any reward or tangible benefit from participating in the study. Each participant in this study was contacted via electronic mail service with a description of the nature and purpose of the study. Participation in the study was voluntary and the anonymity of each participant was ensured by assigning aliases to each volunteer. All data collected during this study will be filed in a secure location for three years and then be destroyed. In addition, I

have omitted information that the participants shared in the interviews that could be used indirectly to identify the participants or other people or organizations referred to in the study.

From the beginning of this study, I sought to ensure that my own perspectives did not impact the findings. I tried to craft research questions that were as broad as possible in terms of the range of possible answers that may result from the research work of investigating them. This study was designed to study four different female elementary school principals, with the purpose of gaining at least four different types of perspectives in response to the research questions. Even within this small group of principals, their experiences and perspectives are unique and varied, which I think positively contributed to the resulting data.

This study used a multicase qualitative research design with two semi-structured interviews and background information collected. Participants from a school district in the Midwest region of the United States were selected based on established criteria (female, principal, more than 2 years of being a principal, within the same district located in the Midwest region of the United States). All procedures in regards to data collection and data analysis were described in this chapter. Ethical considerations were addressed. The following chapter is a description of each of the four participants to give the reader a deeper understanding of the multiple cases studied. Careful attention was given to ensure the female elementary school principal or her elementary school could not be identified.

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## **Chapter 4**

### **Introduction**

This qualitative multicase study examined principals' perceptions toward defining, facilitating and sustaining teacher leadership within their schools. This study used a multicase qualitative research design with two semi-structured interviews and background information collected. Participants were selected based on established criteria. All data collection, data analysis, and ensuring credibility and consistency of the data were described in this chapter.

### **Research Questions**

In order to explore principals' perceptions of teacher leadership, it is important to ask female elementary school principals to define teacher leadership, explain how leadership is fostered in their schools, and explain how leadership can be sustained and continued over time. The following research questions served this study:

- 1) How do female elementary school principals define teacher leadership?
- 2) How do female elementary school principals facilitate the development of teacher leadership in schools?
- 3) How do female elementary school principals encourage teacher leadership and sustain existing teacher leadership structures to address school-wide goals?

### **Interview Results**

Purposeful selection resulted in some similarities in participants. All participants were female, elementary school principals, with three years or more in their current position, and their schools are part of one school district in the Midwest region of the United States. Each

participant's school had a diverse student population – consisting of minority students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with English as a second language. Table 11 outlines each school's demographics with school 1 correlating to Principal Angie, school 2 correlating to principal Betty, school 3 correlation to principal Cathy, and school 4 correlating to principal Debby.

Table 11  
School Demographics

	Enrollment	Free or reduced lunch %	Asian %	African American %	Hispanic %	Multi-Racial %	Pacific Islander %	Caucasian %	English Language Learners %
School 1	564	22.8	1.06	3.55	8.33	4.43	*	82.27	1.06
School 2	525	21.7	2.29	4.95	5.33	6.1	2.1	78.86	3.05
School 3	409	35.6	3.91	10.27	12.22	8.56	2.93	61.86	5.13
School 4	539	35.4	2.41	8.53	9.46	4.64	2.04	72.17	8.35

\* Indicates the number/percent has been suppressed due to a potential small sample size.

Each participant, identified with an alias, had remarkably rich experiences and viewpoints that are described in this chapter. In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected a demographic survey from each participant. Each piece of information provided a deeper look into the experience of the participants in terms of their leadership style and how they facilitate teacher leadership opportunities in their schools. References to specific schools were deleted to protect the confidentiality of each participant and her school.

### **Principal Angie**

Principal Angie, age 50-59, has been an elementary school principal for fifteen years. Prior to becoming a principal, Principal Angie was a classroom teacher for thirteen years, teaching first, third and fourth grades. Principal Angie taught in three different schools, one out

of state and two within the same school district in the Midwest region of the United States. She moved schools within the same school district to open a new school. When asked why she became a principal, Principal Angie stated, “During my time as a teacher, I was given many leadership roles and led committees, which I really enjoyed. These opportunities made me want to pursue a job as a building principal” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 27, 2016).

During the interview, Principal Angie was asked if she considered herself a teacher leader prior to becoming a principal. Principal Angie did indeed consider herself a teacher leader both at the building level and at the district level stating:

I think when I was a teacher I was given leadership responsibilities at the building level to facilitate committees or run different groups or to organize events. And then, I was also performing leadership roles at the district level, so whether it was calendar committee or policy committee or a professional development class for teachers, so I think given all those ranges of experiences I would consider myself being a teacher leader (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Principal Angie shared that these teacher leadership opportunities came about because of the recommendation of her current principal or her seeking out these opportunities on her own due to her interests. Principal Angie continued, “I think initially for the district one, the principal recommended me for certain committees and at the building I think it was a combination of both. I think I said, ‘Oh, I’d like to do this’” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

When asked if there were any teacher leaders that she worked with or considered the model of a teacher leader, that influenced her approach while a teacher, Principal Angie commented:

I think it was more of the person probably that influenced me was... It was the position at the district office which is now, she was classified Professional Development Coordinator, and so she used to come in and model lessons. She worked a lot with new teachers and so I just really admired her work, the way she worked with teachers and the way she conducted meetings and so I think she was a mentor to me. And so I did a lot of work with her as far as facilitating if there was new curriculum, pushing out the new curriculum and things like that (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

When asked to describe or define her own leadership style, Principal Angie shared as a building principal there is too much for any one person to accomplish effectively. As a result, Principal Angie relies on the strengths of her staff to help accomplish many of the building goals. Principal Angie describes her leadership approach:

It is about recognizing in a certain person the skills and then giving them opportunities to use those skills... I have to be careful about delegating because I'm not very good at delegating but I'm better at it now because I think you can't delegate every responsibility. You have to know your teachers really well and know their strengths and then be able to play into their strengths. And sometimes you can help people build on their leadership by giving them opportunities (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

At times, Principal Angie sees the leadership potential in her staff before they see it in themselves. Principal Angie shared one particular conversation she had with a teacher leader in her building and described how the teacher leader did not view herself as a teacher leader.

Principal Angie shared:

One of my probably strongest teacher leaders here, she's been here 16 years and she said to me about two years ago, she said, 'I never saw myself as a leader' and she's very good

at it. But I saw that in her because she's very organized, she's very much attention to detail and if she takes something on, she's very, very committed. So, given all those qualities, that's kind of a lot of things that are natural for a leader to have (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Teacher leadership can be viewed as a formal leadership role or as an informal leadership role within schools. Principal Angie described how teacher leaders can assume both formal and informal leadership roles within her school. Principal Angie shared:

I think informally you can have those teachers who maybe don't feel like they want to be in the spotlight, but they can help indirectly, when they're maybe in a small group or maybe they're even in the teacher's lounge and they overhear something negative, and they step up and say, 'That's really not accurate'. I think that's being a leader too, is being able to stand up to somebody and say, 'You know what? Let's think about this,' or, 'That's not the perception that I got,' or talking negatively about someone or about a parent or about a student. And so, I think informally you have those leaders that can say, 'Let's do the right thing. Even when no one's watching, we're gonna still do the right thing.' And then you have those formal leaders that really want to stand up and they want to facilitate a meeting, and they really want those long-term leadership roles and they really want to be out in front of their peers or their colleagues across the district. I think a combination of both is really good (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

At Principal Angie's school, her leadership team facilitates action teams, teams that are charged with the monitoring and implementation of building school improvement plan (BSIP) goals. Principal Angie and her staff have taken skill finder assessments to better understand their

strengths and weaknesses as individuals. Principal Angie used this information to help her make informed decisions. Principal Angie described the process that she takes when developing these action teams.

When I look at our action teams and the goal champions that facilitate it, I select those people and then I also then select people underneath those action teams that I think can work with those people. Because sometimes if you have a really strong personality you can't have five people that are of the same personality and have them all on that team because they'll plow through (the work). And then you've got other ones that can't see the forest through the trees and they want to talk about everything. And so, I think you have to have a balance of personalities and strengths (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Even though Principal Angie does place teachers on action teams based on the results of the skill finder assessments in an effort to create teams with teachers who “think differently and have different perspectives” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016), she also offers opportunities for her teachers to volunteer to be leaders. Principal Angie stated that she will often state, “Okay, here are our goals. Now, where do you feel like you would like to lead an action team?” And then we got input from the staff and all of that about the direction we wanted to go. So, I think that's a piece that's important. So, I think it is a combination of both that I assign roles but then I also give opportunities. Because somebody might pop up that you didn't think of” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Principal Angie, when describing one of her teacher leaders, shared how this teacher leader found her leadership potential after switching schools and coming to her school. When her previous principal heard that she had taken on formal leadership roles at the building and

district level, the previous principal was surprised because she had not shown those characteristics while at his building. Principal Angie attributed this leadership shift to her finding “a niche here with another group of people and she really found her passion here” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Principal Angie shared that she sees a direct correlation between being a teacher with sound instructional practices and being a teacher leader. And not only does being a teacher with sound instructional practices correlate with being a teacher leader, it also impacts other staff members’ perceptions and views of these teachers. Principal Angie shared:

I strongly believe that instructionally if you talk the walk and you're able to do that, then people respect you because they know you're a hard worker and they know instructionally when they pass by your classroom. It's all those little things, those perceptions and those little things that people notice when they walk by. Are you sitting at your desk? No, you are up teaching you get good results. You build relationships with kids. You're strong instructionally. Then they buy into that work ethic (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Principal Angie has seen her teacher leaders bring about change in their school. When asked to describe why these teacher leaders have brought about change, Principal Angie shared, “I think that if you give something that they are passionate about, and they feel like they have input, then I think that you're validating the work that they do” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016). Additionally, Principal Angie has noticed that having leadership opportunities for her teachers is a motivator and satisfier. Principal Angie noticed:

Over the years when we've surveyed employees to say what about satisfaction, overwhelmingly at this building, satisfaction to them is taking on leadership roles. That

was the number one indicator on the survey. We had several factors listed and overwhelmingly they said taking on leadership was a satisfier for them. I just think that when you know that that's a big factor in their satisfaction, well, that impacts the whole culture because you are giving other people opportunities and you have a wide range of people. The culture of our building, with regards to teacher leadership, has grown from just a few teacher leaders to many teacher leaders (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

At Principal Angie's school, teacher leaders have varying roles of involvement when it comes to financial decisions, personnel selection, implementing new school programs, curriculum redesign and/or implementation, and developing the building school improvement plan. With regards to financial decisions, the "leadership team works to enhance programs through additional revenue sources, such as a yearly golf tournament. Then the teacher leaders decide, with staff input, how to allocate those funds. Staff complete a form requesting funds and the teacher leaders determine if that request is warranted" (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Teacher leaders have a limited role when it comes to personnel selection. The current structure within the school district located in the Midwestern region of the United States hires elementary teachers into a pool and the principals select from the pool of hires. Whenever possible, Principal Angie will schedule interviews and building tours so grade level teams "could attend and so they got to ask some questions and have some input" (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016). One challenge to this current structure arises when teachers like a candidate and that candidate is selected by another principal due to the pool structure in place. Unfortunately, teacher leaders do not have the opportunity to meet all of the



candidates during the hiring process. Principal Angie, when discussing involving teacher leader involvement in the hiring process, noted, “I try to do that as much as I can but it's difficult with our structure” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

When choosing teacher leaders to serve on district committees and/or help redesign the curriculum, Principal Angie both selects certain teacher leaders as well as offering options for teacher leaders who are interested to become involved. When selecting teacher leaders, Principal Angie reiterated:

I look for the people who are instructionally sound, and sensible [chuckle]. Because A, I don't want somebody going over to the district office that is negative and going to sabotage everything along the way. And B, I think that in order to write curriculum and to pilot a program you have to have somebody that has strong instructional knowledge and is going to do the work (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

When offering teacher leaders the opportunity to volunteer their efforts for district level committees, Principal Angie will solicit interested teacher leaders and then select a person if there is more than one interested teacher leader. Principal Angie described why she has input during this process:

Sometimes I'll say, "The district is looking for somebody for social studies, if you're interested, send me your name." Or, sometimes I do put it out there. The Curriculum and Instruction team, I picked somebody that I know is implementing it because I don't think you can go to a committee if you're not implementing it and then try to institute change across the district when you're Googling something and putting it in a book (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

From a district level perspective, Principal Angie notes that the teacher leaders who

serve on these committees receive additional training with the expectation that they will be the liaisons at the building level when questions arise. Principal Angie stated, “So, I think the district has done a good job of having groups of people on committees. I think that when the district rolls things out and they have committees, that always is an expectation that the teacher leaders that are going to facilitate or answer questions (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Having teacher leaders receive the training and then turning around and training the staff at each building has a high level of buy-in. Principal Angie described the importance of district-led initiatives being presented by teacher leaders:

So, I think that when things come out and the people that are on the committees are rolling it out, that it's not just me standing up. And I think that's better than even somebody from the district office, coming over, saying, "This is what we're going to do." Versus the practitioner, that's in the classroom that's been doing it. And quite frankly, the teachers, there is a lot of respect. Again, if you choose the right person that has respect in the building because they're strong instructionally, that stands up there and says, "Okay, yeah this was a lot. But, oh my Gosh, the kids... " (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Ultimately, Principal Angie feels that when teacher leaders can lead the charge, the greatest change will occur. Principal Angie commented, “I just feel like when anything new comes out, it's those teacher leaders that push it out and that's been the most bang for our buck, or been probably the most successful” (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Staff turnover presents challenges for sustaining teacher leadership in a school. As teachers retire, move to another school or another district, and as new teachers join a staff, the

teacher leader dynamics can shift and change. Principal Angie described this challenge when she stated:

I think that's the biggest challenge with anything, initiatives, or building and district wide is staff turnover. When a great teacher leader leaves, I think, 'Oh my gosh because she does so much and just has such a positive influence on the staff. But, I think that's where I've got to always be looking ahead with the big picture and thinking, 'Okay, if I know potentially these two are going to go, who can take her place? Who am I gonna go to and say, 'You know what, I'm really gonna need your help with this. Will you do this?' And I think you build a good relationship with people and they wanna work hard for you. And I think that's another key. So looking ahead I think that's just not just living day to day but living next (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

Ultimately, there will come a time when Principal Angie leaves her current school and a new principal walks into that school. With a culture of teacher leadership already established, Principal Angie shared that to sustain the current level of teacher leadership, the new principal will need to honor the work that has already been done. Principal Angie shared:

I hope that whoever takes my job would have as much passion about the school and the kids and the parents, and the work that we've already done, and honoring the work that we've done in the past, understanding that change. We always have that paradigm of change, and understanding that change is inevitable and that's gonna come and there may be things that, 'Hey, let's try different things.' But I think you really have to honor the work that's been done in the past and the people that have done the work and gotten to where we are with the results (P. Angie, personal communication, September 28,

2016).

Principal Angie demonstrates characteristics of all three leadership styles described previously: distributed leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership.

Principal Angie's ability to recognize skills and strengths in her staff and in turn provide opportunities for these staff members to utilize these skills and strengths in a collaborative manner is a defining characteristic of a distributed leadership style. Additionally, Principal Angie has seen, as reflected in staff surveys, the opportunities to use individual skills and strengths as a key motivator and satisfier with her staff.

Principal Angie's selection of leaders for formal leadership roles is characteristic of a transformational leadership style. Because Principal Angie selects the teacher leaders to be a part of the building school leadership team focusing on the building school improvement plan (BSIP), she is creating a culture where change is needed and she has more direct control over the path the leadership team will take to ensure the goals are being met. As Principal Angie noted, when teachers lead the way in implementing change, there is more buy-in from the staff. This view is consistent with a transformational leadership style in such that change is needed and Principal Angie creates the conditions, namely the teacher leaders being selected, to bring about that change.

Principal Angie demonstrated briefly her desire to be a servant leader. In her interaction with her BSIP team leaders, Principal Angie will pose the question, "Okay, here are our goals. Now, where do you feel like you would like to lead an action team?" By providing the BSIP action team leaders the opportunity to choose in which action team they would like to lead, Principal Angie focus was on the followers. Principal Angie's servant leadership characteristics emphasized the staffs' needs, development, and autonomy.

### **Principal Betty**

Principal Betty, age 50-59, has been a building administrator for fifteen years. During this time, Principal Betty spent eight years as a middle school assistant principal and seven years as an elementary school principal. Prior to becoming a building administrator, Principal Betty was a classroom teacher for ten years, teaching fourth grade for five years and fifth grade for five years. Principal Betty taught in one school and was an administrator in two schools in the same district in the Midwest region of the United States. When asked why she became a principal, Principal Betty stated, “I wanted to help teachers become better teachers” (P. Betty, personal communication, September 28, 2016).

During the interview, Principal Betty was asked if she considered herself a teacher leader prior to becoming a principal. Principal Betty did indeed consider herself a teacher leader both at the building level and at the district level stating:

Yes, I would because I was really always the person who would go forth and do something. Like in committees, I always wanted to be in charge of committees or get involved in committees, first of all. And I really did that because I have always been the kind of person that if you have to have an opinion or you wanna have an opinion, which I do, then you have to be involved in the doing of the thing. You can't sit back and complain about something or sit back and want something to change, but then not be willing to get involved and help with that. That's always been my philosophy. So, I did consider myself a teacher leader because I would help my grade level team, I would get involved in committees. I just really felt that I was a take charge kind of person to get things done and to try new things to move forward (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

When asked if there were any teacher leaders that she worked with or considered the model of a teacher leader, that influenced her approach while a teacher, Principal Betty commented about her teacher leader influences:

My role models, actually a couple. One was a kindergarten teacher and even though I was in upper elementary, I think one of the things that stood out, she was always very professional, she was always very innovative, and even though she was one of those teachers that seemed to be around forever, she was always willing to try new things. So it was never that you would look at her and think, "Oh my God, she's taught that the same way for 20, 30 years." She always was willing to try new things. And then there was another one from a different school that I taught with. She was always a person that, even if she did things the same way, it was always different and she always brought new life to it. So then there were also people that I would always see on committees too, so I saw them very involved so that was motivating to me to get involved (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

When asked to describe or define her own leadership style, Principal Betty shared as a building principal it begins with trust. As a principal, Principal Betty wants her staff to feel empowered to take risks in a safe environment centered around trust. Principal Betty describes her leadership approach:

I really try to be the type of leader that encourages and empowers teachers to make their own decisions, to be innovative, to try things, a shared leadership type role so that I am not a micromanager at all. I want them to feel like they are trusted professionals and that they can try something and if it doesn't work, that's okay. There really is nothing that we're gonna try that's going to be so damaging that it's that bad for kids so that they can

try something, if it doesn't work, then that's okay. We come back to the drawing board and we try something else. With that trust though, I expect people to step up and do their job (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Along with the trust Principal Betty has with her staff, she also feels having high expectations for one another and ourselves is a key to her leadership style. Principal Betty added:

I think that one thing that I share with teachers is that there are high expectations and we have to rise to those expectations. In this day and age, I should not have to be the one walking around making sure that you're here on time, making sure that you're doing this and doing that. Those are things that just come with you being a professional. We should focus our work on doing what's right for kids and having good teaching in the classroom. We're all lifelong learners, myself included, so we should do lots of reading, go to different trainings, continue to learn ourselves (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

When reflecting on who can be a teacher leader in her school, Principal Betty believes that any teacher, who possesses the will and desire to continue learning, can be a teacher leader. Principal Betty commented:

I think it's someone who is willing to get involved. I think it's someone who has earned the trust of their colleagues, however that may be. I think it is someone who works to go the extra mile in terms of bettering themselves. Through classes that they take, the literacy studio, teachers are definitely leaders in our building because they have shown that it's important to them to learn, and not even just important, but they've let staff know that they still can learn from others (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Teacher leadership can be viewed as a formal leadership role or as an informal leadership role within schools. Principal Betty described how teacher leaders can assume more informal leadership roles within her school. Principal Betty shared:

I encourage everyone to get involved and it's even at some points where, if I do notice that there's a teacher that hasn't been involved, then I will strategically bring something their way and say, 'Hey, how would you like to serve on this committee?' so that they can have that chance. But I think that everyone needs to step up and do their part (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Another reason that Principal Betty encourages all of her staff members to be actively involved at some level is to avoid the perception by some that certain leaders are considered to be the principal's favorites as well as run the risk of burning out those leaders who routinely lead.

Principal Betty continued:

So it may be more of a behind the scenes type thing but then other people in our building see them on a committee or doing their part. Because I think a lot of times you run the risk of the same people doing those things all the time, then there's a risk of, 'They're your favorites.' Well no, they're not your favorites, they're just the ones who volunteer to do everything all the time (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

From a formal leadership perspective, Principal Betty utilizes a leadership council made up of one representative from each grade level and department team. These representatives serve three year staggered terms. It is up to the teams and departments to determine who will be the representative on the leadership council. At Principal Betty's school, her leadership council facilitates teams, teams that are charged with the monitoring and implementation of building



school improvement plan (BSIP) goals. Principal Betty has established a system where the leadership council members facilitate these team meetings and report back to the leadership council

So each of those three areas have two to three goal champions that are on our leadership council. And then they're responsible for creating those activities on those goals. And then each staff member, certified staff members on one of those teams too. So then the goal champions meet once a month with their group, their committee, and then they report back to the leadership team when we meet monthly (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Principal Betty seeks input as to what BSIP teams teachers want to be a part of each year. She provided an opportunity for teachers to rank their top three teams and then works to assign them to these teams. Principal Betty described the process that she takes when developing these BSIP teams, "Yes, they get to pick their top three. And then I try to make sure that they were in their top three, and it worked. And this year, with new people, I asked them, "Where would you like to be?" and I placed them on those teams" (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Principal Betty shared that she sees a direct correlation between being a teacher with sound instructional practices and being a teacher leader. And not only does being a teacher with sound instructional practices correlate with being a teacher leader, it also represents the level of commitment beyond the classroom walls and the teaching responsibilities. Principal Betty shared:

I think that the teachers that are involved in building committees, district committees, are the go-getters in terms of helping. Even nighttime events, volunteering, that type of thing, they are the teachers that I see positive things in the classroom. So, I think that

there is definitely a parallel, and they're also usually the teachers that are lifelong learners, that they are innovative, they're learning new things, they want to try new things. When something new comes down from central office, they're not moaning about it, they're willing to give it a try and see what happens (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Principal Betty has seen her teacher leaders bring about change in their school. When asked to describe why these teacher leaders have brought about change, Principal Betty shared that teacher leaders impact student achievement and the culture of a school:

I would say student achievement for sure. I think that it does help your school become... To have the students achieve. But I also think the culture of your school, and just to have a well-rounded school. I think that when you have teacher leaders that are stepping up, and they're really your cheerleaders too. They are the people that when they are involved. For instance, I will have teachers help with in-service too because I know that their peers like to hear it from them (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Principal Betty noted that ultimately, teacher leadership should be impacting student learning and achievement. Whatever actions teacher leaders take, Principal Betty wants it to impact the students. Principal Betty added:

First and foremost, I want them to do the best job that they can in their classroom for their students. I want them to push themselves to become better teachers all the time. So, however that is, if it's through reading, if it's through funding, in-services or finding trainings they can go to, if it's from being on a committee, however that is my biggest goal would be that they feel that they're doing everything that they can for their students, to help their students be successful. I really do think that the people here, I think that we

all have the same goals. I really think that our goal is to make this place a successful place. I think we have parent support. I think that we're on the same page in terms of wanting our kids to be successful. (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

However, Principal Betty understands the time commitment required of teachers, especially teacher leaders. Principal Betty wants her teacher leaders to strive for that balance between work and home. Principal Betty shared, "I also realize, I want it to be a balance too. So, if they have family life, I don't want them to feel forced to be on committees and then have their family suffer. If you have a family with two young children, I don't want you to be on a committee that you're there until 5:00 or 6:00 at night and you're suffering on that side too" (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Principal Betty, when reflecting on the demographics of the teacher leaders she currently has and has had in the past, noted that most of the teacher leaders were not new teachers nor were they highly experienced teachers; rather, they tended to be teachers in the middle of their careers. Principal Betty noted that there are always outliers but new teachers have to learn so many new facets of the job (student relationships, curriculum, classroom management, parent involvement...) while many veteran teachers are comfortable in their surroundings. Principal Betty described her teacher leaders and their experience:

I would say that it's probably a mixture, but for the most part, are probably the teachers with about maybe seven to 10 years' experience. There's probably a few that are more experienced and a couple that might be less, but really, they're probably the middle of the road, so to speak (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Reflecting further, Principal Betty did not think that teacher leaders would consider themselves leaders because they view teacher leaders in terms of seniority. Principal Betty added that at her school, teacher leaders:

probably know that they are in their mind, in their own little world, or maybe even in their grade level, but I don't know if they would across the building. Because I think that a lot of times in education, people look at, if you have more seniority, you know more, which is not always the case. But I think that's the stepping stone, so to speak, the seniority rules, type thing (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

At Principal Betty's school, teacher leaders have varying roles of involvement when it comes to financial decisions, personnel selection, implementing new school programs, curriculum redesign and/or implementation, and developing the building school improvement plan. With regards to financial decisions, the teacher leaders have very little input. Many of the decisions around finances are made by Principal Betty because the resources are pre-determined in a way that allows very little input from teachers. Principal Betty felt that she "had people on the financial team and thought, 'I'm just wasting resources there because financial is just kinda financial'" (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Teacher leaders have a limited role when it comes to personnel selection. The current structure within the school district located in the Midwestern region of the United States hires elementary teachers into a pool and the principals select from the pool of hires. However, when Principal Betty is hiring staff members, she pays close attention to the existing personalities and strengths of existing grade level or department teams. Principal Betty added:

I know that when I am hiring, when I'm interviewing, I'm definitely thinking about personalities and who will work well together, both on the positive and the negative side.

If I have a grade level that is struggling, then I'm gonna look for someone who is positive and a go getter, and that type of thing to be in to add to that team. And if I have a really, really strong team, then when you're interviewing you look, you have a newer teacher that you think, 'Oh, this person has a lot of potential, but they might need someone to take them under their wing,' then you can think about putting that person on a stronger team and they could still be okay (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

When choosing teacher leaders to serve on district committees and/or help redesign the curriculum, Principal Betty both believes in offering options for teacher leaders who are interested to become involved. When selecting teacher leaders, Principal Betty stated that she will send out an email and ask for volunteers. Principal Betty shared her belief with regards to seeking volunteers for building and district level teams and committees:

A lot of times at the building level, a lot of our committees that we have we try to have kindergarten through fifth grade. So I'll just say, 'I need a representative K through five, and a SPED, and an encore,' so that way everyone has a say and no one can say 'My voice wasn't heard.' At the district level, I usually just put out an email and say, "at the district level, they're gonna put together a science committee. Anyone interested, let me know.' Then I'll say, 'If I have lots of people interested I'll draw someone out of the hat,' that type of thing. I'll just send out an email to everyone, and get them to volunteer (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

For Principal Betty, communication is key. Not only communicating a need, upcoming change, but the why behind a decision. Throughout her time as a principal, Principal Betty has learned that her staff wants input in the decision-making process. At times, seeking that input is valued

and important. At other times, Principal Betty is forced to make a decision and as long as the staff understands the why behind her decision, they are more likely to accept that decision and move on. Principal Betty commented on this lesson she has learned

I think it's the same thing that I talked about a little bit earlier that it's just shared leadership and that they feel empowered to try things. The people at this school like to be involved in decision making. However, they know that there are some decisions that I have to make as a principal. When those decisions come, what I've learned from the staff at this school is that they just wanna know why. So if there's a decision that I have to make, they're okay with whatever I make as long as they are informed why the decision was made (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Staff turnover presents challenges for sustaining teacher leadership in a school. As teachers retire, move to another school or another district, and as new teachers join a staff, the teacher leader dynamics can shift and change. Principal Betty shared that they have very little turnover from year to year, usually just one or two teachers a year. As a result, the new teachers just “join in” and become a member of the team. Principal Betty is mindful of the challenges new, especially brand new teachers, face and wants these teachers to focus on the new challenges without focusing on teacher leadership roles. Principal Betty added:

When I do have a new teacher, I will tell them upfront, ‘Please take the year to get used to being a teacher. Don't feel like you have to get involved in everything. Do what you feel comfortable,’ because it's a big change from going from college to then being a full-time teacher. So, I do tell them to take a year to get used to being a teacher, and then there's always gonna be time to be involved in committees and that type of stuff (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Ultimately, there will come a time when Principal Betty leaves her current school and a new principal walks into that school. With a culture of teacher leadership already established, Principal Betty shared that to sustain the current level of teacher leadership, the new principal will need to spend time getting to know the staff, their personalities, and leadership characteristics. Principal Betty shared, “It's not really a concern, but what is hard as the new person coming in will just be learning the personalities of everyone, and learning who the teacher leaders are because you do wanna have go to people whenever you're new” (P. Betty, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Principal Betty demonstrates characteristics of two of the three leadership styles described previously: distributed leadership and servant leadership. Principal Betty's ability to build trust and empower her teachers are defining characteristics of distributed leadership. Principal Betty's approach to allowing teams to select representatives for the building leadership team as well as allowing individuals to select which BSIP team they want to be a part of demonstrates her ability to provide autonomy and trust with her staff.

Principal Betty does demonstrate servant leadership characteristics when she described her understanding of providing a work-life balance. When Principal Betty described not wanting staff to be on committees that require more time after or before school and in turn that would interfere with the balance in their life, Principal Betty is putting the needs of her staff in the forefront of her words and actions.

### **Principal Cathy**

Principal Cathy, age 40-49, has been an elementary school principal for three years. Prior to becoming an elementary school principal, Principal Cathy spent six years as a first-grade

teacher and Title 1 teacher and five years as an instructional coach working in a different district within the same state. Principal Cathy worked in two different schools as a teacher and moved schools for because of the opportunities to grow as a teacher. Additionally, Principal Cathy spent three years with the state Department of Education serving as the director of school improvement. When asked why she became a principal, Principal Cathy stated, “Through the years, I’ve had several opportunities to help and support students and teachers. My passion is to lead a highly effective school that meets the needs of all students” (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 30, 2016).

During the interview, Principal Cathy was asked if she considered herself a teacher leader prior to becoming a principal. Principal Cathy did indeed consider herself a teacher leader both at the building level and at the district level stating:

So within my district when I very first started, I had been teaching in an elementary classroom, and then I became an instructional coach not long after that. However, part of the reason I became the instructional coach is that I was very active in developing our curriculum and I think outspoken in a positive way. I’m all about solutions, not having time to whine, without a better word, about what’s going on, unless I would just really, philosophically disagree with it. And so, I think that our administrators probably saw that in me, and I think they really supported me in that. Then when an instructional coach position came open, then I was in that position, and so that definitely elevated me to a leader within the title, but I felt like I was a leader as a teacher in my classroom as well. (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

When asked about whether she believes that all teachers have leadership potential within them, Principal Cathy agreed to this point and added:



I think that each one of us have something innate in us. I think that there are people who I see as teacher leaders within my building, but know that they want to be in the classroom, because that is their passion and love, to be with kids every single day. And there're just some of us that we have that same passion, but we wanna do it on a different level, and have that influence with adults, and then you can influence even more children. And both of those paths are great (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

When asked if there were any teacher leaders that that she worked with or considered the model of a teacher leader, that influenced her approach while a teacher, Principal Cathy commented:

There was a kindergarten teacher that was right next to me and we we're good friends as well, and our kids were good friends. She was a phenomenal, still is a phenomenal teacher. She definitely inspired me. And we did a lot of collaboration together. So I think, being able to see those teachers that were really truly connected to the whole child made an impact on me. You know as a parent, whenever a teacher makes you feel good about your child and your child's education, and I think that really resonated with me and was something that I tried to emulate (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

When asked to describe or define her own leadership style, Principal Cathy shared as a building principal it is important to provide a voice to her staff and empower them. As a result, Principal Cathy relies on the strengths of her staff to help accomplish many of the building goals. Principal Cathy describes her leadership approach:

Shared, most definitely. I feel like, when we say life-long learner, I think that's a little bit over used, because we don't really think about the meaning of that anymore. "Oh, you're

life-long learner." But if we just really stop and pause. What does that mean? And I feel like I am, and I don't feel like there's any way I can have the answer to every problem, issue that comes up in this building. And so, my focus is to really empower teachers to have a voice, to make sure they feel vested in what we are doing in the building and in the district, and then let them know that their voice is important and matters. We start that with our leadership team, but typically what we end up doing if it's a big issue, we're gonna talk about it in leadership and get a Plus/Delta started, or get some kind of document going or a conversation started, and then, we delve it out to the entire staff (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

In addition to empowering her staff, Principal Cathy described the importance of building relationships with her staff and knowing their strengths. To Principal Cathy, the relational piece is vital when it comes to providing opportunities for staff to be leaders. Principal Cathy added:

Some people may not have an opinion, or may not care or want to be a part of it and that's great, but I want everybody to have the opportunity. And I would say, I'm very much relational. Knowing your teacher's spouses, their children, what's going on in their lives, I think is extremely important. I feel that same way about my supervisors. You don't want them to just think of you as just the principal at their school, but what's going on with you. But you have to have that high standard and accountability as well. And I think when you build strong relationships and people believe in you and they know what the expectation is, no one wants to disappoint, and so I think that's what's worked well for me (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

At her school, Principal Cathy believes that everyone can be a leader. During the process of revisiting the school's mission statement, Principal Cathy described how this very notion of everyone being a leader was manifested at her school. Principal Cathy stated:

Anybody can be a leader. When we redid our mission and vision last year, that was a great opportunity for us to have some really wonderful conversations about what leaders look like. And so, I'll just share with you here really quick. This is a process that took us a long time to get through, but in our vision, we had developing leaders, innovators, and creators for a successful future, because we had the conversation about, anyone can be a leader. Being a leader doesn't mean you have the title of principal, it doesn't mean that you're standing in front of a room, it means you can be leading by example, just doing something innovative and inspiring someone else. And so, when we were talking about the vision, it was really important that, for us, for students to know that your vision of being successful does not have to look like the title or standing up. It can be, you being an innovator in some way, on a computer program, or it can be you creating something. Whatever that looks like for you, we wanted to encompass all of that (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Principal Cathy further explained how this idea of leadership has transcended into the culture at the school. The idea that everyone, students and staff, are viewed as leaders, has created a culture of leadership at Principal Cathy's school. Principal Cathy described this culture:

I would describe it as innovative. This may sound odd but confident. I think the leaders that we have in this building, I think everyone to some degree feels like a leader in this building, and we talk about that everyone is a leader in this building. We even kicked off

the school year with talking about that, because everyone in this building impacts kids. And if you do that you are a leader. Now there are gonna be some people who probably visually stand out more than others, but I would say people have a lot of confidence in them. And so I think that's why it works (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Teacher leadership can be viewed as a formal leadership role or as an informal leadership role within schools. Principal Cathy described how teacher leaders can assume both formal and informal leadership roles within her school. Principal Cathy shared some of the formal leadership roles teacher leaders have at her school:

Like every school in our district, we have a leadership team, and that is definitely a formal role. Those individuals are paid a stipend for that position and are expected to be leaders within our BSIP teams and are called upon whenever we're making decisions. And so, everyone knows who those people are, but we also leave it open for people to sign up to come to the meeting, if they would like to even though they're not on the leadership team (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

In addition to the formal leadership roles that teachers can have at Principal Cathy's school, Principal Cathy also shared that many informal leadership roles exist as well. These informal leadership roles come from educators own passion and interests. Principal Cathy elaborated:

So when we talk about ones that are not formal leaderships roles, I think that just looks like great teaching. I think that's who people look to as people who are just willing to step up. Whenever we have our reading committee, they step up. This year we had three people that just said, "We want to be on it because we love what's going on." Those are

the kind of other leadership opportunities, committees that aren't necessarily our formal BSIP, CSIP, but those types of things (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

At Principal Cathy's school, her leadership team is comprised of one representative from each grade level and department team. Principal Cathy described the process that she takes when developing the leadership team:

So this is my third year here, and we had a leadership team established when I came in, and that was not something that I felt like I should rock the boat on, right out of the gate. And so, right now, there is a person from each grade level, and then there are representatives from special education, from Encore, our counselor, and then, our reading interventionist and our ELL teacher, just to kind of have a representation of everything that's happening in our building. So that's been set. This is again the third year, and I felt like after this year, what we're going to do is have an opportunity, if another grade level staff person would like to switch, take that spot, I want to just leave that open for conversation (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Principal Cathy mentioned that this past year, they replaced a representative from one of the teams. This replacement came about because one staff member showed an interest in being a part of the leadership team and Principal Cathy wanted to honor that interest and desire.

Principal Cathy shared her thoughts on encouraging passion and interest in leaders by sharing, "And I feel like even if you don't see someone as a leader, if they're wanting to volunteer, they're wanting to provide leadership in the building. And I think you need to give people an opportunity to grow in that capacity if that's what they want to do" (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Principal Cathy shared that she sees a direct correlation between being a teacher with sound instructional practices and being a teacher leader. And not only does being a teacher with sound instructional practices correlate with being a teacher leader, it also impacts other staff members' perceptions and views of these teachers. Principal Cathy described her thoughts, "I think there are some teachers who are amazing educators. They don't care to be put in the spotlight. They want to come in and teach kids and that's what their lens for education is about, and may not always stand out as a teacher leader. However, they are viewed as a leader by their peers" (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Principal Cathy has seen her teacher leaders bring about change in their school. When asked to describe why these teacher leaders have brought about change, Principal Cathy shared, "I think, where it's come from us as a truly through the system of our BSIP. Because those people who have taken on the leadership roles are now presenting at our staff meetings, they're presenting at our professional development. And they're doing it because they feel passionate about it. And also, I think, too, as a leader, I provide those opportunities for them, because I want them to have these experiences. I can stand up in a room full of teachers, and I think inspire them to some degree, maybe more than some degree I hope. But when they have a peer that comes in, that says, 'I'm doing this in my classroom. It absolutely works. This is amazing.' And when that peer is respected by others, there's just nothing more powerful than that. And I think they feel empowered. And I feel like that's been contagious the last couple of years (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Principal Cathy has expectations for all of her staff to be leaders in one regard. These expectations stem from her ability to demonstrate to her staff she is willing to collaborate and

walk alongside her teachers every step of the way. Principal Cathy stated that the expectations for leadership begin with her and permeate throughout the staff. Principal Cathy commented:

At our school, we talk about leaders, innovators and creators. I have a teacher right now who is very low-key yet amazing. She comes up with these authentic, incredible projects for her kids, and I think she sees that I value that. As far as having a formal expectation, I would say, if you asked any of my teachers, if I expected them to be leaders in the building, I think they would all answer yes. Because I just have a sense of those high expectations. I'm constantly in rooms. I've taught in rooms before, just to collaborate and to get in there. I'm willing to roll my sleeves up with my teachers to make sure we get done what we need to get done. And I don't think we should ever ask our teachers to do anything we're not willing to do. So I think that my expectations are led by my actions (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Furthering her notion that her expectations are led by her actions and believing that all staff can and should be leaders, Principal Cathy also does not rely on one group of individuals to make the decisions. Principal Cathy seeks out the input of various staff members when making decisions and these staff members change from time to time. Principal Cathy feels it is very important for her staff to have a voice. Principal Cathy described her reasons for seeking input from multiple staff members and how they react to this opportunity for input:

I don't like looking just to a specific group of people to get all of the answers. And I think, through the last couple of years, my staff realizes that. I'm not asking you in a superficial way, if I'm asking you about it, I really want your input. And I think they've seen changes made based on their input. And I have had several people make a comment, 'I've never been asked before,' and the appreciation of just being asked. And

so, going through this process of changing our mission and vision, I think helped. You have to walk the walk, talk the talk. And I think when they see that, then they believe that (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

At Principal Cathy's school, teacher leaders have varying roles of involvement when it comes to financial decisions, personnel selection, implementing new school programs, curriculum redesign and/or implementation, and developing the building school improvement plan. With regards to financial decisions, Principal Cathy shared there are limitations to what teacher leaders can be directly involved with based on district expectations. Principal Cathy stated:

My very first year we really tried to have a finance committee, and it did not work well. There are just so many constraints that are already setup by the district of, 'This is how these monies will be spent.' I think where they have an impact and influence on how we spend money is more on our activity account. And that's based on projects that we have focused on our BSIP. But when it comes to how you split money up within the building, you just can't do that very well with a team of teachers (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Teacher leaders have a limited role when it comes to personnel selection. The current structure within the school district located in the Midwestern region of the United States hires elementary teachers into a pool and the principals select from the pool of hires. Whenever, possible Principal Cathy involves her staff in the hiring process in one of two ways. First, staff members can sit in on interviews, if possible. Second, staff members have been asked about the needs of their team so Principal Cathy can look for those particular qualities in candidates. Principal Cathy, utilizing teacher voice and input, described in more detail how she incorporates teacher leaders into the hiring process:



What I typically try to do, depending on the position, if I'm doing interviews, then I might ask teachers to sit in on an interview. Especially with our teacher assistants, I always have someone sitting with me if possible. What I do whenever I know we have an opening is I go to those team members, and I say, 'What are you looking for in your team? What does your team need?' (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Staff turnover presents challenges for sustaining teacher leadership in a school. As teachers retire, move to another school or another district, and as new teachers join a staff, the teacher leader dynamics can shift and change. Principal Cathy described her approach to ensuring that new staff members are acclimated to the culture of the school:

I meet with our new teachers or people that are new to our staff. We have regular meetings on a monthly basis, and I'm pretty clear about the expectation of them when they come in to our building. I let them know, we consider you the best of the best and that's what we expect to see. And then, we just have conversation during that time. 'What's going well? What's not going well? What can we do to support you?' I just feel really lucky that we have just an amazing staff right now, they're very supportive of each other (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

In today's school systems, there are multiple layers of accountability for leaders. Ultimately, the building principal is the one responsible for what occurs at the school. If these measures or layers of accountability did not exist, Principal Cathy shared that things would not look much different than they currently do because her staff is on the same page when it comes to providing successful opportunities for each and every student. Principal Cathy described her thoughts:

You know I talk about empowering, but I'm also constantly checking in with those teachers, and making sure that the direction and alignment is where we need it to go. I'm very comfortable with the way we have it right now. Could we expand it? Probably. But I think even if there was a wider variance of accountability, ultimately, I am very serious about my job and I'm passionate about why I became an educator, and that is so that every single kid that I know, knows that they have an opportunity to be successful. It doesn't matter what your background is like, it doesn't matter your socioeconomic status, that within you and your heart and your brain, you can do whatever you need to do with your life, and that we have people around here to help you do that. And so, I think that, that passion would probably still continue, and it might look a little bit different, but probably not a lot (P. Cathy, personal communication, October 7, 2016).

Principal Cathy demonstrates characteristics of all three leadership styles described previously: distributed leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Principal Cathy's desire to empower her staff and provide a voice is prominently defined in characteristics of a distributed leader. Principal Cathy's ability to seek their trust in a collaborative manner while seeking input from multiple groups, not always the building leadership team, is yet another characteristic of a distributed leader. Principal Cathy even summarized her leadership style as a shared leadership style, sharing the leadership among many individuals and groups.

Principal Cathy's role that the building leadership team has with the BSIP is an example of her transformational leadership style. Principal Cathy described the teacher leaders' contagious energy in bringing about change, a change that is centered around their mission and vision of recognizing and developing leaders at her building.

Principal Cathy's investment in developing long-term relationships with her staff and students is a key descriptor of a servant leader. Principal Cathy's relational approach to developing leaders as individuals and educators demonstrates her desire to truly know the individual first. Additionally, Principal Cathy is a leader who leads by example which further develops the relationships in her building. When Principal Cathy can recognize and act on the needs of her staff, she is acting as a servant leader.

### **Principal Debby**

Principal Debby, age 40-49, has been an elementary school principal for seventeen years, thirteen years at her current school and four years in a neighboring school district. Prior to becoming an elementary school principal, Principal Debby spent eight years as a third, fourth and fifth grade teacher in the same building. After teaching, Principal Debby left the district where she was a teacher and served as an elementary assistant principal for 1 year and then a principal for three years in a neighboring district before returning to the district in the Midwest region of the United States. When asked why she wanted to be a principal, Principal Debby stated, "I was taking classes to earn an Educational Specialist and the instructor was the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources so he encouraged me to apply to be an Assistant Principal in the district where he worked" (P. Debby, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

During the interview, Principal Debby was asked if she considered herself a teacher leader prior to becoming a principal. Principal Debby had opportunities that led her to consider herself a teacher leader both at the building level and at the district level. These leadership opportunities led her down the path of becoming a principal. Principal Debby stated:

I served on the leadership team at the elementary school where I worked. I also after, probably after four years, I was able to be an assistant to the principal. And in that role, I was the 504 facilitator at the elementary building. I also became a coach for the Accelerated Schools Program. And I went to summer trainings and then brought it back to our school. Because of those experiences, it reinforced that I wanted to be a principal (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

When asked if there were any teacher leaders that that she worked with or considered the model of a teacher leader, that influenced her approach while a teacher, Principal Debby stated there were those model teachers but that was not the reason she became a leader. Principal Debby added, “Yes, there were. But I don't think that's why I became one. In high school and college had a lot of leadership positions and was involved in student organizations. And so I think part of it is just your personality too. It was natural for me” (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

When asked to describe or define her own leadership style, Principal Debby shared as a building principal it is her responsibility to continue to change and transform the learning for all at her school. Principal Debby described her leadership style:

We all want to be transformational. I smile because I hope that I inspire and lead by example and hope that others improve because of my guidance and assistance with them to be reflective practitioners. I've done the Strengths Finders, and so that's a very interesting analysis of what you are and I'm very organized and concrete sequential. I'm not as creative as I'd like to be, but I don't think you have to be very creative when you're a transformational leader (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Teacher leadership can be viewed as a formal leadership role or as an informal leadership role within schools. Principal Debby described who can be a leader at her school when she stated, “I think anyone can be a leader if you offer the opportunity. At some level everyone can be a leader. And it's up to us to have staff who feel empowered to display initiative to fix something or make an improvement upon something” (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016). Principal Debby added how teacher leaders can assume both formal and informal leadership roles within her school:

Formal leadership roles would be leadership team, which is an applied position that we go through an interview process and we have more applicants than positions open, because it's a 10-person team that's dictated through the district because it has a stipend attached to it. Assistant to the principal, we have two positions, that it's a stipend through the district and I have two teacher leaders that are in that role. We have Bus Buddies that teachers are a liaison to a specific bus. We have our Beyond the Bell, a partnership with the local community, where we have teacher leaders that facilitate two nights after school, the tutoring program. We have within our special education department, leaders that are training teachers and helping teachers. We have district policy committee representatives. We have district calendar committee representatives, district curriculum committee representatives (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Principal Debby believes that there is a large interest in teacher leaders wanting to be a leader because they want to make a difference and have their voices heard. Principal Debby shared her belief in why teacher leaders want to be involved:

Because I feel that they see the purpose behind it. They see that the work that they're doing is driving action. No one wants to meet just to meet but if a teacher can see

something being accomplished because of their efforts, then that builds upon.

Informally, within every grade level team, I see different individuals or department team, like it could be a SPED group or a specials group, I see different teachers that they take on a leadership role like. For example, in first-grade one teacher is in charge of the first grade blog. A second teacher is in charge of making sure everybody has the handouts for Reader's and Writer's Workshop. They each have divided up those jobs (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Principal Debby shared that she sees a direct correlation between being a teacher with sound instructional practices and being a teacher leader. And not only does being a teacher with sound instructional practices correlate with being a teacher leader, it also impacts other staff members' perceptions and views of these teachers. Principal Debby shared:

My instinct immediately would be yes and I'm thinking of strong teacher leaders in our building, yes, but I can also see outliers. I have a couple of teachers that work really, really well with students, but not as well with adults. It's just they work better with adults than they give themselves credit, but because they lack the confidence, they're not as effective (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

When asked if it was her responsibility as a building principal to help develop this confidence in teacher leaders, Principal Debby added, "Yes, but I also think that some of that is just within. There are some individuals that you could give specific feedback and compliment and they still will not have that confidence. It's just not their natural tendencies" (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016). However, when it comes to hiring teachers, Principal Debby looks for leadership potential in all of her candidates. "When I'm hiring teachers, I'm looking for teacher leaders. I'm hiring, I find that I'm not willing to maybe settle in

my hiring. I'm looking for leaders. And it's not just a candidate telling me about how they'll be a teacher leader, it's looking at what they've already done to be a leader” (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Principal Debby has seen her teacher leaders bring about change in their school. When asked to describe why these teacher leaders have brought about change, Principal Debby shared, “Buy-in of building initiatives, district initiatives, our school improvement plan. It's hard for a person to buy into approaches that are just from top down. It has to be generated from them” (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016). Additionally, Principal Debby shared that teacher leaders are the BSIP goal champions and work to define, monitor and report on these goals to the entire staff. Principal Debby described how her teacher leaders impact the BSIP:

We have divided up the BSIP, so that a team of three to four teachers to five, maybe three to five teachers are focusing on one objective, one goal and our goals align with the district CSIP. How that team decides to meet that objective or an action step to take, it's up to them. So it's truly, the checks and balances are through their monitoring of their progress of what they developed and we have a section where we write comments about the work they're doing and often the comments that they write on our BSIP is just as powerful as the data (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

In order for a leadership team to be successful, Principal Debby believes that different perspectives are necessary. In order for different perspectives to exist, it is important to have teacher leaders, with differing levels of experience, representing the team. Principal Debby commented on the demographics of her leadership team:

I think it's a good mix because when I think about our leadership team, I have some veteran, very veteran or classic teachers on that team. It has to be that way. It has to be a

mix. You want it to be set up that way because you want to recognize the past when you're building upon future initiatives. You can't just disregard the work that has already taken place (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

At Principal Debby's school, teacher leaders have varying roles of involvement when it comes to financial decisions, personnel selection, implementing new school programs, curriculum redesign and/or implementation, and developing the building school improvement plan. With regards to financial decisions, the teacher leaders' main responsibilities deal with the grade level budget but rarely impact larger school-wide budgetary decisions. Principal Debby stated, "They're involved during budget time when every grade level or department has a certain amount of money to spend, and then they can determine how to spend it. We don't have a very large budget at the building level" (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016). Principal Debby, while serving as a principal in a different district, had more of an opportunity for teacher input on certain building projects. Principal Debby added, "I've worked in a previous district that my building budget was larger, but it's bare bones in that there isn't a lot of extra. The leadership team was able to... We would do landscaping, for example, where we did one year or a sign in front of the school. We had more funding so we were able to pick projects to complete" (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Teacher leaders have a limited role when it comes to personnel selection. The current structure within the school district located in the Midwestern region of the United States hires elementary teachers into a pool and the principals select from the pool of hires. As a result, Principal Debby does not have teacher leaders generally be a part of the hiring process. Principal Debby described her views on teacher leaders being a part of the hiring process:



That's tricky. I've worked with different superintendents and some superintendents always remind us unless they're going to be the ones that fire, they cannot be the ones that hire. And I just have that in the back of my mind. What I've done in the past is when it's a position like a counselor, a music teacher, I'm maybe more apt to have them meet the top three candidates and then we go from... Then I make the recommendation from there. In grade levels, I never know for certain that it's going to be in this grade level. The way we hire, you wouldn't know you're hired for a pool. I do not do that for grade level positions (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Principal Debby noted that leadership is a key component of the culture within the school. The culture of teacher leadership is demonstrated by the teachers' actions. Principal Debby described her view of the school's leadership culture:

I describe it as strong because I feel that their actions show it strong by wanting to be on a leadership team, having more applicants and positions. Everybody serves, working with the BSIP objective. That's just a norm we've established and I don't receive any pushback or negativity about it. If you ask for volunteers, we had representatives from the Joplin school district that came two weeks ago and I asked for teacher leaders that could share with them their learning on the continuous improvement process and I had so many people volunteer that I narrowed it down. I feel that if you're a principal and when you're needing volunteers you have them and you can select from them, then it's showing that you have developed teacher leaders. (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

In addition to have teacher leaders as part of the culture of her school, Principal Debby noted that student leadership also encompasses the culture of the school. Principal Debby added:

We have student leadership roles and we couldn't have student leadership roles without teachers sponsoring a category. And so, we have many student leadership roles. But we have over 350 student leaders and teacher leaders who are sponsoring all of the roles and that came from a book study that we had, "The Leader in Me," and it just built from there as a staff (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Staff turnover presents challenges for sustaining teacher leadership in a school. As teachers retire, move to another school or another district, and as new teachers join a staff, the teacher leader dynamics can shift and change. Principal Debby described this challenge when she stated:

I don't feel like I feel it as much as other, I perceive, other places feel it. I remember being a teacher leader and I remember almost being able to predict who in our building, my principal would call to help her. Who would have this job or this task. As a principal you have to be so conscious about asking different people to do different things that you're trying to spread the spotlight as much as possible. And by doing that, you're not going to feel when as much when somebody retires or there's a change in staffing. I am very conscious about that (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

As a building principal, Principal Debby believes it is her responsibility to provide opportunities for teachers to be in the spotlight and highlight their own potential. Principal Debby shared one example where she purposely selected teachers to present to a visiting school district who had not been selected previously or thought of as presenters by district leaders. Principal Debby shared her rationale for selecting these teachers to present:

I purposely selected names that have never presented before, purposely. And I had some other names that I could easily have called but I submitted other names and they

presented. I selected this individual because I'd seen them doing it in their classroom and they were able to articulate and model how to... One was class meetings, one was data notebooks. They had a good format. The other one was setting smart goals and reaching them with your class. But these aren't necessarily teachers that would just volunteer for that. It's kind of a judgement call as a principal. It's kind of like when you're a... I use the term I'm the 'school mom' but it's like you're the mom and you're making sure that your children are having different opportunities (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

In today's school systems, there are multiple layers of accountability for leaders. Ultimately, the building principal is the one responsible for what occurs at the school. If these measures or layers of accountability did not exist, Principal Debby emphatically shared that things would not look much different than they currently do because her decisions are based on what is best for students. Principal Debby described her thoughts on accountability measures influencing her decisions by stating, "Absolutely not. That doesn't dictate or guide what I do. It's from within" (P. Debby, personal communication, October 6, 2016).

Principal Debby demonstrates characteristics of all three leadership styles described previously: distributed leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Principal Debby's ability to allow the staff the opportunity to select members of the building leadership team is a key characteristic of a distributed leadership style. This process allows for greater collaboration amongst the leadership team as they are directly responsible for selecting members on the team. As the team carefully selects these members, the decisions are made with regards to how the team members will contribute and collaborate together. Principal Debby's willingness

and desire to seek input from multiple individuals and groups is another example demonstrating her distributed leadership style.

Principal Debby's desire to bring about change and do what is best for the students and school is a defining characteristic of her transformational leadership style. Principal Debby even categorized herself as a transformational leader and shared that her decisions are based on what is best for the students. When looking to hire new teachers, Principal Debby looks for leaders who have the ability to drive the change with their colleagues.

Principal Debby also demonstrated servant leadership characteristics through her desire to make sure that every staff member serves. When Principal Debby seeks volunteers, she purposefully and intentionally will seek out individuals who have not had the opportunity previously. Principal Debby seeks out new individuals to share their thinking and learning in an attempt to develop her staff as leaders.

### **Organization of Data Analysis**

A semi-structured personal interview was conducted to gather additional information and explore the principal's perceptions on teacher leadership. The findings for the four participants interviewed identified four main themes. The main themes include:

1. Main theme 1: belief that all teachers can be leaders by building leadership capacity
2. Main theme 2: empowering teachers to be decision makers
3. Main theme 3: identifying key skills and strengths in leaders to allow them to be lifelong learners
4. Main theme 4: the importance of building trusting relationships

These themes will be explained and explored in much greater detail in chapter 5 in the findings section.

## **Summary**

This chapter represented the participants' interviews of this study. This chapter contextualized the participants within the study, presenting a description of their professional backgrounds as principals and providing insight into their perceptions as teacher leaders. All participants reported that their past experiences with teacher leadership influenced the way they currently approached the concept. Furthermore, all participants shared examples of how they define, facilitate, and sustain teacher leadership, and encourage teacher leadership to address school-wide goals. Teacher leadership tended to be defined either as ideal qualities or as a set of tasks, roles, and opportunities with a belief that all teachers can be teacher leaders. Participants described how they model leadership themselves and provide opportunities in order to facilitate teacher leadership in a shared leadership framework. Finally, teacher leadership was sustained and encouraged to address school-wide goals through building capacity, decision makers, and lifelong learners. All these findings served to form an impression of female elementary school principals' perceptions of teacher leadership.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary of the Study**

This qualitative multi-site case study examined principals' perceptions toward defining, facilitating and sustaining teacher leadership within their schools. This study used a multicase qualitative research design with two semi-structured interviews and background information collected. Participants were selected based on established criteria. After collecting the data, the information was coded and second coded to identify themes or patterns. Chapter 5 expands upon the analysis conducted and then delves into the qualitative analysis from data collected through the personal interviews.

In order to explore principals' perceptions of teacher leadership, it is important to ask female elementary school principals to define teacher leadership, explain how leadership is fostered in their schools, and explain how leadership can be sustained and continued over time. The following research questions served this study:

- 1) How do female elementary school principals define teacher leadership?
- 2) How do female elementary school principals facilitate the development of teacher leadership in schools?
- 3) How do female elementary school principals encourage teacher leadership and sustain existing teacher leadership structures to address school-wide goals?

### **Findings**

For this qualitative case study, teacher leadership was examined through the eyes of three leadership styles and theories: servant leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership. When applying these theories to the interview responses received by the participants,

all of the participants' responses demonstrated characteristics of all three leadership styles and theories. All of the participants supported the idea of including teacher leaders in school leadership; however, each participant approached teacher leadership in a slightly different way. As a result, each participant demonstrated different leadership styles in their perceptions of teacher leadership.

The findings for the four participants interviewed identified four main themes. The main themes include: (1) belief that all teachers can be leaders by building leadership capacity, (2) empowering teachers to be decision makers, (3) identifying key skills and strengths in leaders to allow them to be lifelong learners, and (4) the importance of building trusting relationships. It is noteworthy, that these four themes also transcend the three leadership styles and theories explored in chapter 2 – transformational leadership, servant leadership, and distributed leadership.

First, a central theme across all four participants was a belief that all teachers can be leaders by building leadership capacity. Within the transformational leadership style and theory, this concept of building leadership capacity is similar to the findings of DuBrin (2007), developing and transforming people. Similarly, within the servant leadership style and theory, developing leadership capacity is similar to the findings of Greenleaf (1977) and Liden et al. (2008). Finally, within the distributed leadership style, building leadership capacity can occur as a result of teamwork and collaboration which is similar to the findings of Harris (2008) and Spillane et al. (2007).

A second theme noted across all four participants was a belief in empowering all teachers to have an impact on decisions made at the building level. Each participant discussed empowering teachers to be decision makers and influence makers with students and staff.

Although each participant utilized slightly different strategies to empower their leaders, the ideas of autonomy and empowerment were consistent within all the interviews. Within the transformational leadership style and theory, this concept of empowering staff to be decision makers is similar to the findings of Gregory Stone et al. (2004). Similarly, within the servant leadership style and theory, developing autonomous empowered staff members is similar to the findings of Greenleaf (1977) and Liden et al. (2008). Finally, within the distributed leadership style, building autonomous leaders who are empowered to contribute to the greater school-wide goals which is similar to the findings of Harris (2008) and Louis and Wahlstrom (2011).

A third theme found in all the participants' interviews was identifying key skills and strengths in leaders to allow them to be lifelong learners. Each participant noted that certain skills are found in all staff members. Although the approach to identifying these key skills varied from participant to participant (some chose to assign leaders to various roles while others provided more of an interest-based approach to determining roles), the understanding that the identification of these skills was important for them to grow and continue to develop as leaders was evident in all four participants. Within the transformational leadership style and theory, this concept of identifying key skills is similar to the individualized considerations found in the findings of Avolio and Bass (2004). Similarly, within the servant leadership style and theory, developing these key skills is similar to Greenleaf (1997), Gregory Stone et al. (2004), and Liden et al.'s (2008) idea of conceptual skills and the desire to help others. Finally, within the distributed leadership style, developing the strengths of individuals is similar to the findings of Smylie et al. (2007) and Leithwood et al. (2006).

Finally, a fourth theme identified across all four participants was the importance of building trusting relationships. The development of trusting relationships allows the common



mission, vision, and values to be the central tenant of the work accomplished within schools. The development of trusting relationships leads to higher job satisfaction and motivation. Within the transformational leadership style and theory, this concept of building trust and relationships is similar to the findings of DuBrin (2007). In conjunction with developing trusting relationships, the idea of higher motivation and job satisfaction is consistent with the findings of Judge and Piccolo (2004). Similarly, within the servant leadership style and theory, developing trusting relationships is similar to the findings of Greenleaf (1997), Gregory Stone et al. (2004), Liden et al. (2008), Russell and Gregory Stone (2002), and Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010). Finally, within the distributed leadership style, developing trust within leaders is similar to the findings of Spillane (2005).

## **Conclusions**

In answering the first research question, "How do female elementary school principals define teacher leadership?", the principals in this study defined teacher leadership in terms of ideal skills, tasks, roles, and opportunities. These definitions are consistent with the research by Lambert (2005), Levin and Schrumm (2016), Spillane et. al (2007). According to the principals in this study, the definitions of teacher leadership were more notably embedded in their responses to the second and third research questions. All of the principals in this study provided examples of both formal and informal teacher leadership, including individual projects, serving on building and district committees, and engaging in professional development experiences.

In answering the second research question, "How do female elementary school principals facilitate teacher leadership?" the principals in this study answered by

sharing examples of how they provided opportunities for teachers to be leaders, having an atmosphere of collegiality and collaboration, and empowering their teachers to seek out teacher leadership opportunities. The examples of how teacher leadership is facilitated, shared by the participants in this study, are consistent with the research by DuBrin (2007), Robinson et. al (2008), and Liden et. al (2008).

In answering the third research question, "How do female elementary school principals encourage teacher leadership and sustain existing teacher leadership structures to address school-wide goals?" the principals in this study indicated sustaining teacher leadership was accomplished through building capacity, maintaining a shared vision, and organizational structures. Building capacity took many forms, often overlapping with the opportunities for teacher leadership discussed within the main themes of the first two research questions. The examples of how teacher leadership is sustained to address school-wide goals, shared by the participants in this study, are consistent with the research by Anfara and Angelle (2007), Aviola and Bass (2004), and Gregory Stone et. al (2004).

Major themes frequently related to each other across the research questions. The qualitative findings of this case study indicated: (a) principals perceive there to be various and numerous roles in which teacher leaders can be involved both formally and informally; (b) principals engage in various methods to facilitate teacher leadership but the most productive method is to identify and then capitalize on individual strengths of teachers; and (c) principals' leadership styles are not an isolated leadership style or theory; rather they are a combination of various well-known leadership styles and theories.

## **Implications for Teacher Leadership**

This study focused on female elementary school principals' perceptions of teacher leadership within schools; however, there are several implications for schools, school districts, and teacher education programs with regards to teacher leadership. One area for school districts to explore is how schools and districts view teacher leadership. Is teacher leadership defined in a way that creates a path toward administration or is teacher leadership defined and encouraged in a way that allows teachers to remain in the classroom setting and still be viewed as a teacher leader, both formally and informally?

As for teacher preparation programs, one recommendation for practice arising from Principal Debby's desire to hire leaders was to introduce pre-service teacher candidates to the concept of teacher leadership in their teacher education preparation programs. Teacher leadership does not have to simply be a path to building or district level administration. There are multiple avenues, as described in previous chapters, for teachers to assume both formal and informal leadership roles. These avenues for teacher leadership, along with various leadership styles, can be exemplified in teacher education programs. If pre-service teachers have a greater understanding of different leadership styles, working collaboratively with a building administrator can occur more naturally with a greater understanding of the characteristics of the leadership style the administrator demonstrates.

School districts and teacher education programs can utilize the "Rubric of Emerging Teacher Leadership" (Lambert 1998) with their adult learners as a tool to explore the various continuum stages across the four indicators: adult development, dialogue, collaboration and organizational change. Having conversations about the continuum stages across the four

indicators will allow teacher leaders the opportunity to reflectively evaluate their own stage and aim for further development as teacher leaders.

### **Future Research**

The first direction for further research is an investigation into the differences between teacher leadership at the elementary and secondary levels. During the initial interview, Principal Betty shared that she had served as a building administrator at both the elementary and middle levels. She indicated that teacher leadership is much different at an elementary school setting than it is at the middle school setting. Studying teacher leadership or secondary principals' perceptions of teacher leadership at a secondary setting would be one avenue for further research to see if differences in perceptions of teacher leadership exist and if they do, why do they exist.

A second direction for further research is a study of teacher education preparation programs and the concept of teacher leadership roles. A large-scale analysis study of different teacher education preparation programs, possibly involving interviews of teacher education preparation program chairpersons, may explore the extent to which pre-service teachers are exposed to the idea that teachers can assume leadership roles, both with and without formal titles.

A third direction for further research is a replication of this study in different surroundings or settings. This study occurred within the context of one suburban school district located in the Midwest region of the United States. This study could be replicated in a rural and urban settings in different regions of the United States and represent both larger and smaller districts.

A fourth direction for further research is a study similar to the researcher's study, but on a larger scale, with more attention paid to demographics. A study could be conducted with a larger group of participants at more varied sites, and the demographics of the sites and participants could be taken into account during analysis. Within this study, a comparison study could be done between male and female principals to determine whether the gender of the participants or years of experience would affect their leadership approach. Similarly, the demographics of the schools could be analyzed in more detail, perhaps with respect to the various subgroups within each school. Future researchers could deliberately select schools across different districts to determine whether those differences influence principals' perceptions on teacher leadership in an effort to make the findings more generalizable.

A fifth direction for future research is to examine additional leadership styles and the relationships they have to teacher leadership. This study examined transformational, servant, and distributed leadership styles to inductively and deductively show relationships between these established leadership styles and principals' perceptions of teacher leadership. However, there are many additional styles of leadership and a researcher could comparatively study additional styles of leadership to find additional relationships between these styles and teacher leadership roles within a school.

Finally, a sixth direction for further research is a perceptual matching study. Research could be conducted that explores both principals' perceptions and teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership at the same time. The researcher could interview both principals and teachers to analyze whether those perceptions agree with each other, and to

what extent. Additionally, the researcher could also observe the school setting to observe if the perceptions of both the principal and the teacher leaders are applied within the daily workings of the school setting.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Date

\_\_\_\_\_, Principal

\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Dear -----

My name is Matt Wachel, and I am an elementary assistant principal in the Park Hill School District. I am also a doctoral student enrolled in the Curriculum and Teaching (Ed. D.) doctorate program at the University of Kansas. I have been granted permission by KU's Institutional Review Board to conduct a research study for my dissertation, titled The perceptions of teacher leadership in elementary schools according to female elementary school principals. In addition, your district has given me permission to contact you for my study.

The purpose of my dissertation is to explore female elementary school principals' perceptions of teacher leadership. As principals today have many responsibilities, various forms of shared leadership (such as teacher leadership) have become widespread. Most of the scholarly literature concerning teacher leadership only questions teacher leaders about their own experiences, which overlooks the perceptions of principals. Because principals are the leaders of record at their schools, it is important to know their perceptions on teacher leadership.

I would like to request your participation in my dissertation study. I recognize your time is extremely valuable. Participation in this important study will require a short demographic questionnaire and two interviews. The first interview will last approximately one hour and will be audio-recorded with your consent. The second is for follow-up purposes, will not last more than half an hour, and will not be recorded.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in my study, and look forward to hearing from you. I am hoping to schedule an interview with you at your school site by November 15 at a time that is convenient for you. I will call you within three days to follow up on this e-mail. If you have any questions, my phone number is 816 522-2279, and my email is wachelm@parkhill.k12.mo.us. In addition, the chair of my dissertation committee is Dr. Steven White; his phone number is 785 864-9662 and his e-mail is s-white@ku.edu.

Sincerely,  
Mr. Matt Wachel

Appendix B:  
Informed Consent Form

## **Informed Consent Form**

### **Consent to Participate in Research**

Title of Study: The perceptions of teacher leadership in elementary schools according to female elementary school principals

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Matt Wachel, a doctoral student at the University of Kansas. This study contributes to Mr. Wachel's dissertation, leading to an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Teaching. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a principal in a local elementary school and you have served as a principal at your site for at least 3 years.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore female elementary school principals' perceptions of the phenomenon of teacher leadership. As principals today have many responsibilities, various forms of shared leadership (such as teacher leadership) have become widespread. Most of the scholarly literature concerning teacher leadership only questions teacher leaders about their own experiences, which overlooks the perceptions of principals. Because principals are the leaders of record at their schools, it is important to know their perceptions on teacher leadership - how they define it, how they facilitate teacher leadership, how teacher leadership influences school goals, and how leadership is sustained over time.

### **Procedures**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will do the following things:

- 1) Complete a short demographic questionnaire that will last approximately 10 minutes.
- 2) Participate in an interview that will last approximately 1 hour.
- 3) Participate in a short follow-up interview not to last longer than half an hour, in which you will review the transcript from the first interview.

### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

- 1) Questions are about perceptions of teacher leadership, and leadership experiences. There is the risk of recalling unpleasant memories or practices. You may decline to answer any question.
- 2) There is the risk of confidentiality concerns, and the worry that responses may be traced back to you. To protect your identity, aliases will be used. In addition, all transcripts will be analyzed individually and as a group. You will only see your own transcript, not that of the other participants.

### **Potential Benefit to Participants and Society**

This study will provide valuable insight, currently absent from scholarly literature, into female elementary school principals' views of teacher leadership. This study could

potentially benefit principals, as findings may suggest crucial ideas for principal support. In addition, this study could benefit teachers as well, as what principals say could be used as a guide for teacher education and professional development.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. To protect your identity, aliases will be used.

The first interview will be audio-recorded with your consent. The interview will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher. As part of the follow-up interview, you will be given an opportunity to review the transcript of this interview and clarify any data. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings, which will be stored for three years on a password-protected computer before being erased. The transcripts, raw notes, and consent forms will be stored in non-sequential order, separate from each other, in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home for three years before being destroyed.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which in the opinion of the researcher warrant doing so. Your participation or non-participation will not affect your employment status or any other personal consideration or right you usually expect.

### **Identification of Investigators**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, Mr. Matt Wachel, at (816) 522-2279, or [wachelm@parkhill.k12.mo.us](mailto:wachelm@parkhill.k12.mo.us). You may also contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Steven White, at (785) 864-9662, or [s-white@ku.edu](mailto:s-white@ku.edu)

### **Rights of Research Subjects**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Human Subjects Committee of Lawrence (HSCL), University of Kansas; Telephone: (785)864-7429 or email to [HSCL@ku.edu](mailto:HSCL@ku.edu).

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE**

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any

additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, or email [HSCL@ku.edu](mailto:HSCL@ku.edu).

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

---

Type/Print Participant's Name

---

Date

---

Participant's Signature

Researcher Contact Information:

Matt Wachel

Dr. Steven White, Ph. D

Principal Investigator

Faculty Supervisor

Education Department

Education Department

Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Room 330

Joseph R. Pearson Hall, Room 330

University of Kansas

University of Kansas

Lawrence, KS 66045

Lawrence, KS 66045

816 522-2279

785 864-9662

**CONSENT TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED FOR INTERVIEW**

I consent to be audio-recorded during the first, approximately hour-long interview. I understand I can decline to be recorded at any time.

---

Type/Print Participant's Name

---

Date

---

Participant's Signature



Appendix C:  
Request for Approval from School Districts

Date

Person, title

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Matt Wachel, and I am an elementary assistant principal in the Park Hill School District. I am also a doctoral student enrolled in the Curriculum and Teaching (Ed.D.) doctorate program at the University of Kansas. I am about to begin working on my dissertation, and I would like to request permission to conduct research in ABC Unified School District, as approval is required before undergoing Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures.

The purpose of my dissertation is to explore female elementary principals' perceptions of the phenomenon of teacher leadership. As principals today have many responsibilities, various forms of shared leadership (such as teacher leadership) have become widespread. Most of the scholarly literature concerning teacher leadership only questions teacher leaders about their own experiences, which overlooks the perceptions of principals. Because principals are the leaders of record on their campuses, it is important to know their perceptions on teacher leadership-how they define it, how they foster leadership on campus, how it influences student achievement, and how leadership is sustained.

The benefits of this study include reflection on professional practices and leadership philosophies. Teacher leadership in particular can assist a campus in developing a leadership culture, and has the potential to affect student achievement. Discovering how principals perceive the concept may be inspirational as well, as findings may yield beneficial practices or areas for improvement in encouraging teacher leadership.

In order to explore principals' perceptions of teacher leadership, I would like permission to interview elementary school principals and I will also need access to their contact information. If you have any questions or would like to meet with me in order to discuss this, my phone number is 816-522-2279, and my e-mail is wachelm@parkhill.k12.mo.us. Additionally, the chair of my dissertation committee is Dr. Steven White; 785 864-9662 and his e-mail is s-white@ku.edu.

Last of all, I will need an official, signed letter on official district letterhead granting me permission to research in the school district. I look forward to hearing from you, and I greatly appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,

Mr. Matt Wachel

Appendix D:  
Demographic Questionnaire

### Demographic Questionnaire for Principals

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire. The purpose of this form is to gather some descriptive data about the participants who are part of the sample population for my study. My study is a qualitative study, which is the kind of study that seeks to tell a detailed story. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. My analysis will be based on the data from our interviews and from the data on this questionnaire.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1) Which best describes your age?

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70-79

Decline to state

2) How would you identify your race?

3) How long have you been a principal at your current school?

4) How long have you been a principal (total, including previous schools)?

5) How many years were you a classroom teacher?

6) What grades did you teach?

7) In how many schools have you been a teacher?

8) If you taught in more than one school, what was the reason for moving schools?

9) What led you to become a principal?

10) How would you define teacher leadership?

11) Approximately, how many students are at your current school?

12) Approximately, how many teachers are at your school?

☐ I understand I can abstain from answering any questions on this questionnaire.

Appendix E:  
Interview Protocol

## Initial Interview Protocol

### SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE PARTICIPANT

I want to express my appreciation for your involvement in my study. My interview protocol is divided into several sections. First, I would like to gather some information that informs your background as a leader. The next three sections are meant to gather information about how you define, facilitate, and sustain teacher leadership at your school. Your responses will allow me to make connections between your story, my research, and check the consistency of data. So, let's get started!

- 1) Prior to becoming a principal, would you have characterized yourself as a teacher leader? Explain.

Probe 1: How did you demonstrate leadership while you were a teacher?

Probe 2: Did you have any other leadership experiences? Did your principal provide motivation for you to lead as a teacher?

- 2) Do you remember any teacher leaders that you worked with/looked up to/noticed when you were a teacher?

### SECTION 2: DEFINITION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

- 3) How would you describe your own leadership style?

Probe 1: Who can be a leader at your school?

Probe 2: When do you consider a person to be a leader?

- 4) If someone says "teacher leadership", what comes to mind?

Probe 1: What formal roles come to mind (such as grade level leader)?

Probe 2: What informal roles come to mind (such as unstructured contributions from teachers)?

- 5) Do you see any parallels between effectiveness as a classroom teacher and teacher

leadership?

6) In what areas or activities is teacher leadership most beneficial or appropriate?

7) What are your expectations for teacher leadership to happen at school?

Probe 1: Is it currently meeting those expectations?

Probe 2: Do you see a relationship between teacher leadership and your school realizing its aspirations found in your mission statement?

### **SECTION 3: FACILITATING TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

8) What is your vision for teacher leaders at your school?

9) Who currently tends to assume teacher leadership roles at your school-anyone from a particular grade or content area, or veteran vs. experienced?

Probe 1: How do you choose/recruit individuals who would be well suited to leadership roles?

Probe 2: Do teachers self-select themselves to be leaders?

10) What are your school's main goals and concerns right now? In what ways have teacher leaders contributed to substantive changes in the operation of your school?

11) Accountability, test scores, grades, and demographics are important issues for school leadership. How are teacher leaders involved in financial decisions?

- Personnel selection
- Implementing new school programs
- Curriculum redesign and/or implementation
- Developing the school plan

### **SECTION 4: SUSTAINABILITY OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

12) What is the current culture of leadership at your school?

Probe 1: Who initiates conversations about changes needed at your school, or identifies areas that are excelling and need to be maintained?



Probe 2: Who tends to be the most active in these conversations-new teachers, veteran teachers, administrators?

13) At your school, are there any concerns for the future of teacher leadership?

Probe 1: Any retirements, turnovers, new staff, etc. on a large scale?

14) What do you think would help encourage more teachers to adopt leadership roles? As a principal, how do you see yourself able to affect this?

15) If you ever leave this school, what would be your concerns for the future of the leadership culture at your school?

That brings us to the end of the interview questions. You've shared a lot of information with me about your background and your leadership philosophy, and this has been very helpful to my research into principals' perceptions of teacher leadership. At this point, would you like to summarize and share some thoughts about teacher leadership and its role in school leadership, or what it has meant to you as a principal?

Thank you very much for your time and assistance, and when the transcript of this interview is ready, I will be contacting you for a shorter follow-up interview. I'll share the transcript with you, ask if you feel you have represented yourself accurately, let you know if I have any emergent interpretations or questions, and ask you if I am on track in my interpretation of your data. This encounter will not be audio-recorded, but I may take notes.

Please let me know if you would like to be shown the final summary of findings at the conclusion of the study (after I have interviewed all of my participants). I would be happy to get together with you and share my findings. Again, thank you so much for your participation!

### Follow-up Interview Protocol

- 1) First, I want to show you the transcripts--do you see anything you would like to correct, or add to? Is there anything you would like me to not use?
- 2) Now I would like to clarify some details about your background as a teacher, teacher leader, or assistant principal prior to becoming a principal (MAY NOT APPLY TO ALL).  
(Ask about unclear details from initial interview.)
- 3) You considered yourself a teacher leader. Does your past as a teacher leader influence the way you approach teacher leadership today? If so, how?
- 4) Have you had any other thoughts/insights that you would like to share?
- 5) Would you like me to contact you later to show you the finished version?